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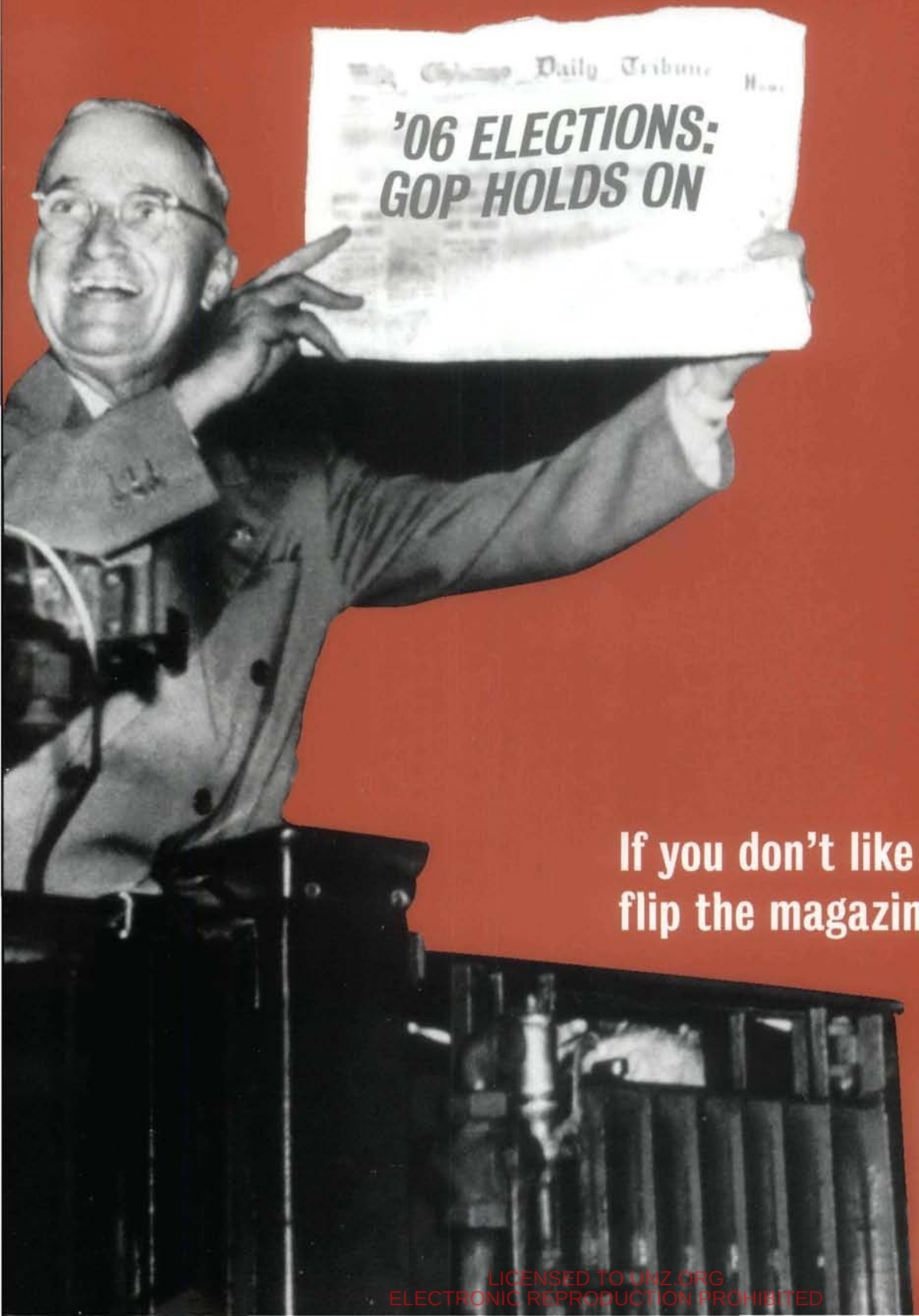

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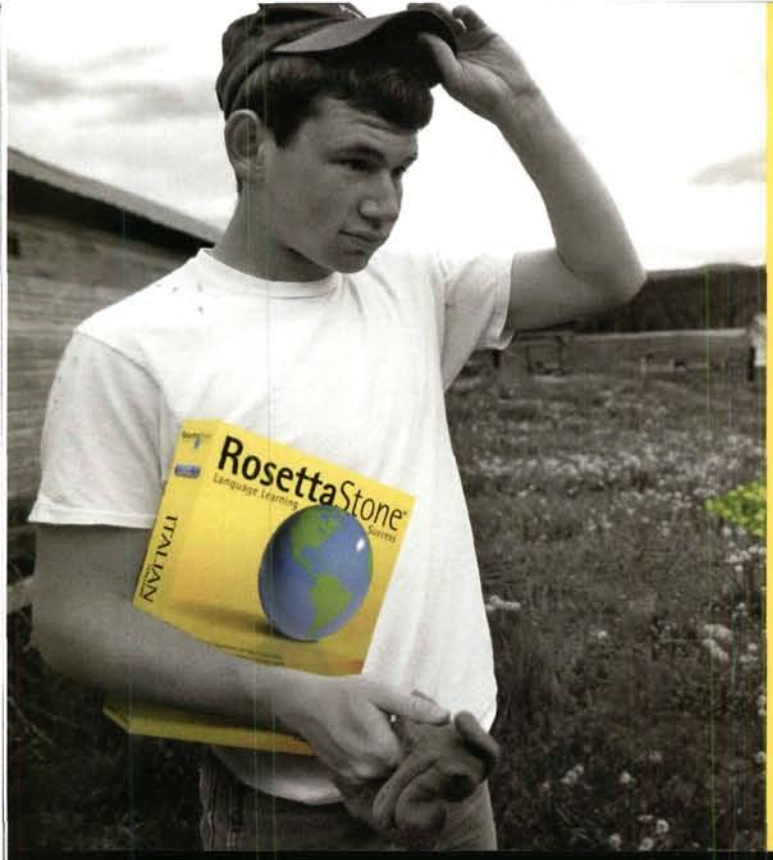

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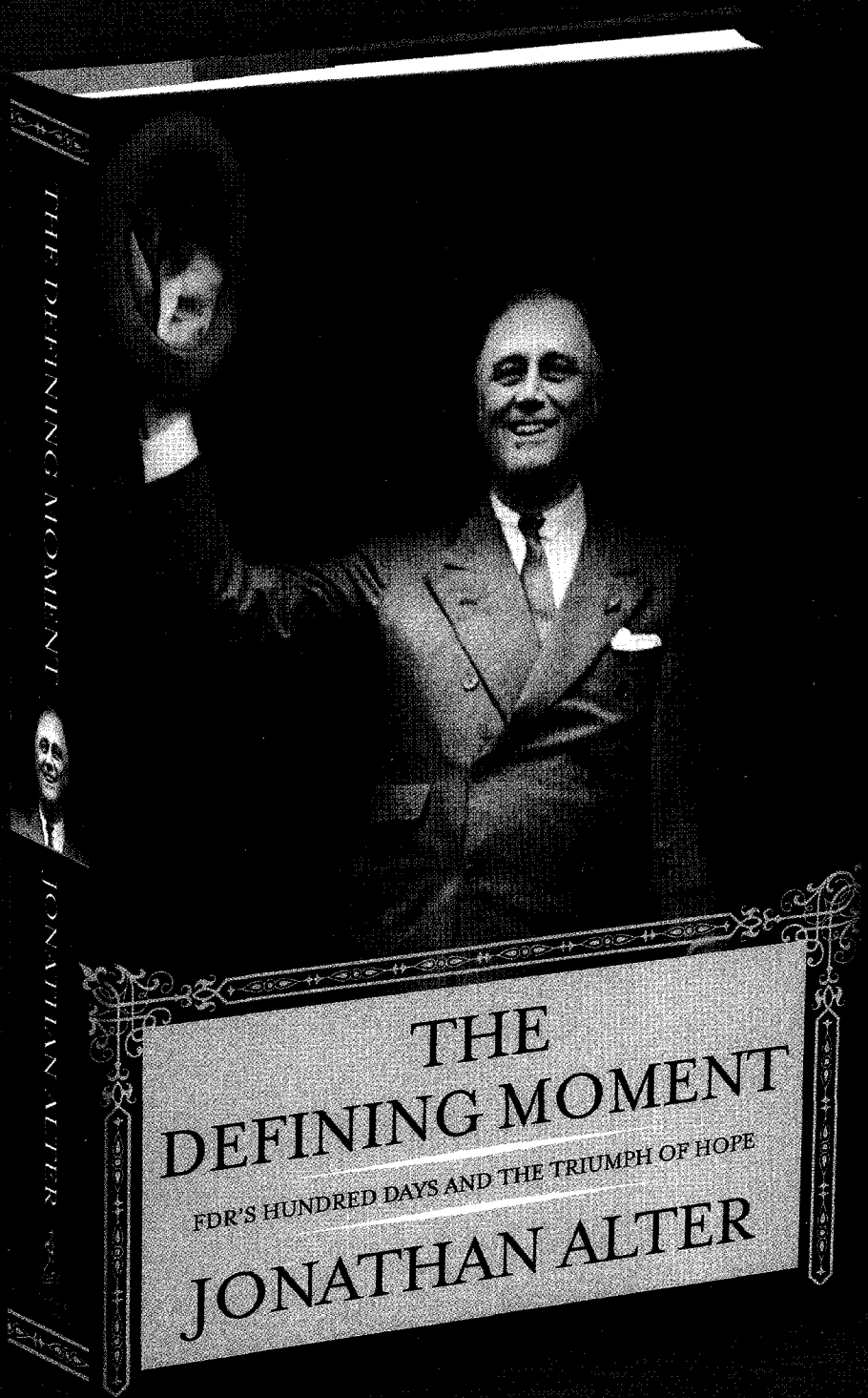

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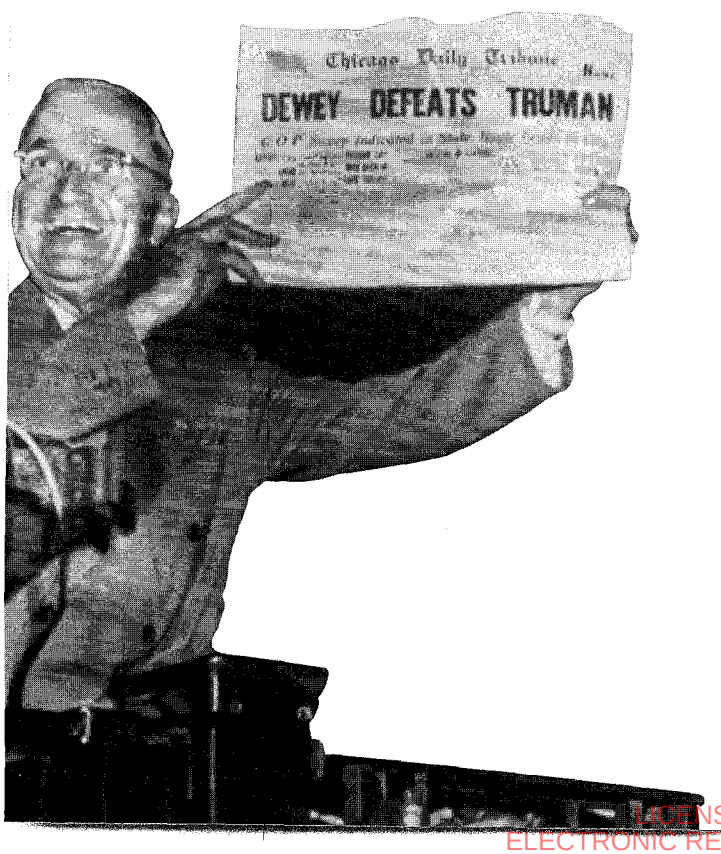
A Note To Our Readers

Ever since *The Chicago Daily Tribune* confidently proclaimed "Dewey Defeats Truman" in 1948, print journalists have been well aware of the pitfalls of publishing on the eve of an election. Our December issue, which went to press in late October, confronted us with that very problem, and we've dealt with it decisively—by having it both ways. We've created two cover packages: one that assumes a Democratic victory, the other, that the GOP holds on. To do so, we rounded up a bipartisan group of veteran Washington observers and asked them to write short pieces in response to either outcome, or both.

Hindsight may be 20/20, but foresight can often be more revealing. Whenever you're reading this, and regardless of what happens (or *happened*) on November 7, we think you'll find Dick Armey's surprisingly ambivalent musings on a GOP "win" as thought-provoking as Tom Daschle's advice to "victorious" Democrats.

There's another advantage to our approach: If you don't like the actual election results, you can always flip the magazine over and pretend things turned out differently.

–The Editors



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Dick Armey
Ed Kilgore
David Greenberg
Mark Schmitt

THE GOP HOLDS ON

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Try governing for a change

By Dick Armey

Throughout the election season, Republicans have been on bended knee praying to retain control. Let us be clear: A near-death experience is not a validation of past performance. It's also important to note the GOP held the majority for the last two years as the result of aggressive redistricting and the failure by Democrats to present a coherent message.

In light of a wafer-thin Republican majority in the 110th Congress, Republican leadership must target issues that affect regular Americans. The small-bore thinking that produced an explosion in earmarks and industry-specific subsidies must give way to big ideas. This means addressing the most important national

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issues of our time, and producing a record of legislative accomplishment by reforming the pension systems, limiting federal spending, and creating choice and competition in education.

Democratic gains in the House and Senate are not a repudiation of the basic conservative tenets that resonate across America. When Democrats want to win elections they pretend to be us, embracing messages of fiscal responsibility and traditional values. When we get insecure, we pretend to be them, creating new government programs and spending freely. All the while, we lose sight of the fact that when we're like us, we win.

For congressional Republicans looking at the next election cycle, the challenge cannot be holding the majority, but instead should be growing the majority. Psychologists tell us that often whatever you fear is what you will make happen. It is time to drop the obsession with losing the majority and focus on immigration, retirement security, and spending.

In order to understand the way forward, it is worth remembering how we got into this mess—marked by unchecked federal spending, unethical personal behavior, and a remarkable penchant for putting politics ahead of policy. Consider how far we have come in the past dozen years.

Gone is an emphasis on common-sense legislation that wins voters' attention and respect. In 1995, after 40 years of Democratic decadence, we made members of Congress live under the same laws as other Americans. In contrast, during the past year, members of both parties have been protected by their own, indicted by law-enforcement officials, and become a disgrace to us all.

The idea of constitutional government, limited to specific objectives, is in retreat. Instead, the appropriations process—in which Congress wields its pen over our collective checkbook—has made the distasteful phrase "favor factory" quaint. Until that process is fundamentally changed, the sordid stories of 2006 will only be the tip of the corruption iceberg.

Like the "sacred fire of liberty" that animated George Washington, conservative ideas are the guiding light for our slender majority. Recent historical evidence illuminates the point. When we stand for meaningful ideas—as Ronald Reagan did in 1980 and as the Contract with America did in 1994—we earn voters's continued trust.

Congressional Republicans must clearly communicate their objectives. We all know that we are staring directly at the largest bankruptcy in history with the ballooning costs of Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare. We must not wriggle away from our intent to tackle this crisis. Republicans should talk honestly about a failing government program essential to the retirement plans of millions of Americans. They should not shy away from inevitable attacks. An adult conversation with voters is possible, and mature deliberation can produce a system that respects current commitments, protects future retirees, and establishes positive returns through personal accounts.

Next, Congress must do its job irrespective of the White House and the political machinations endemic to an open presidential race. One of Armey's Axioms is that political ambition is a great compromiser. Congress is designed to produce legislation and provide oversight. It is not a platform for individuals who seek higher office. Neither Congress' appropriate constitutional role nor the narrow politics of the presidential selection process is well-served by tactical maneuvers by those on the Hill or in the White House who are eyeing 2008. Legislators are entrusted with the care of a co-equal branch of government, and must not compromise this trust for the ambitions of a few.

In future, Republicans will win on the merits of their proposals. When laws are presented openly and given a fair vote, Congress builds confidence. It shows that members can govern and displays competence. To that end, it is vital for leadership to enforce discipline with committee chairmen. Special-interest fiefdoms should be history; a chairman's sole task should be to translate good ideas into clear, narrowly focused legislation. It only takes a few town-hall meetings to know if your constituents support what is happening in Washington.

In every major poll, the public sees the economy as the number-one priority for Congress and the president. Increasingly the pocketbook voter trusts the Democrats more on economic issues; to date, Republicans have ceded the field. Many pocketbook voters will take dangerous, ill-conceived ideas over no ideas whatsoever, and Republicans will not be so lucky next time. We know what high taxes, over-regulation, and protectionism will do to the economy, and that is what Democrats are proposing. Our belief in the free-market system and entrepreneurship is good for the economy, and voters appreciate that.

The record shows it has been a long time since a majority of congressional Republicans bothered with conservative ideas. Fortunately for the GOP, thoughtful leadership exists in the House in the Republican Study Committee, and from senators like Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.).

Right before I left Congress, I wrote myself a note. It said: When we come to Washington, we do things we shouldn't to stay in the majority, so we can do the things we know are good for the country. But we never get around to the latter. And the real question is whether you are zealous in the pursuit of liberty, as Barry Goldwater said. If you're zealous in the pursuit of good policies, that will probably get you to the right place.

If you're zealous in the pursuit of saving your seat or saving your majority, you'll probably get to a bad place in a hurry. The new Congress must move beyond the obsession with political goals. They've forgotten Armey's axiom—that good policy makes good politics.

Dick Armey, chairman of FreedomWorks, was formerly majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives.

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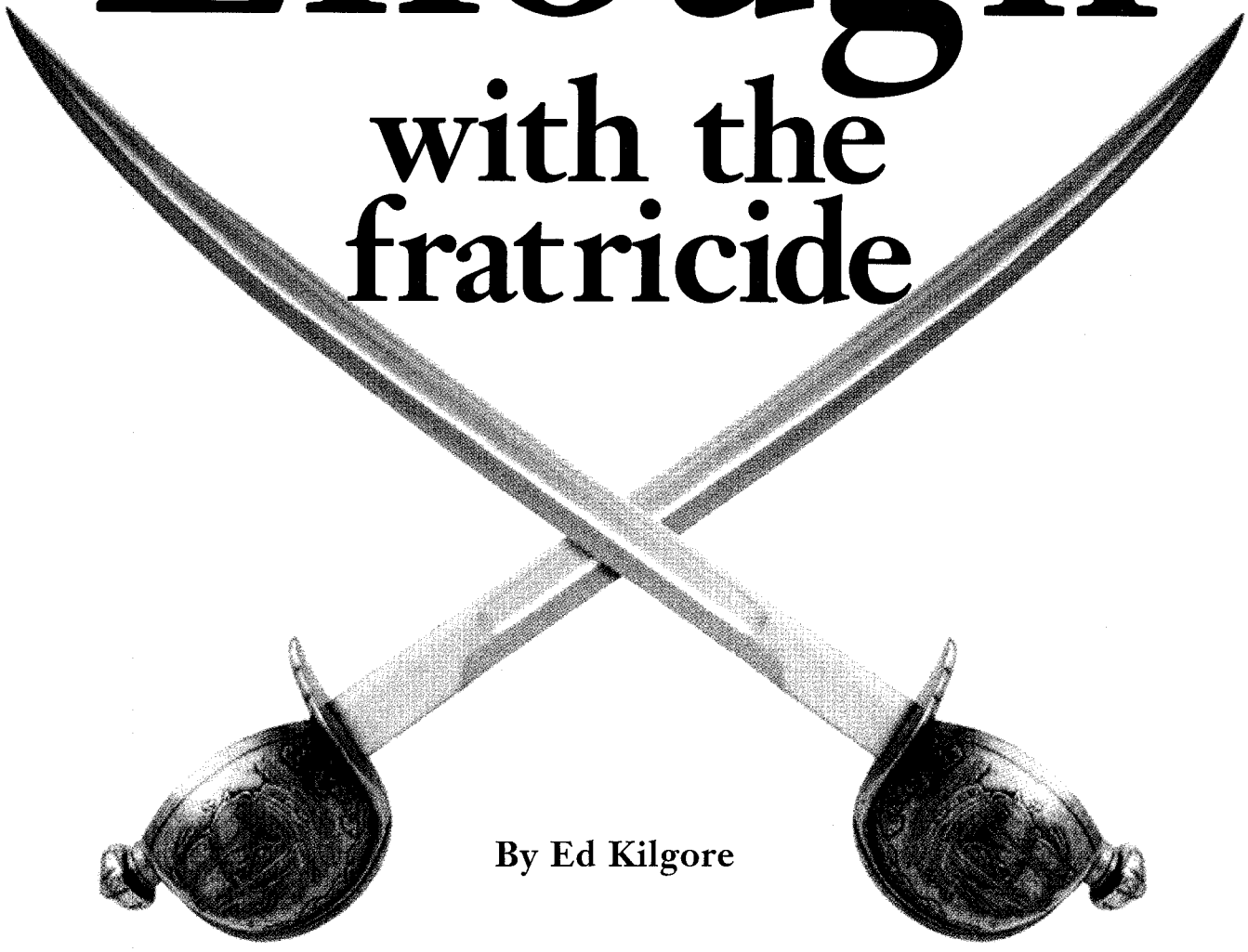
Enough with the fratricide



By Ed Kilgore

Fellow donkeys, I feel your pain. Like you, I could taste that victory right up until the terribly disappointing deal went down. Like you, I wonder if we are just snake-bit or suffering the wages of sin for long-past Democratic malfeasance. Like you, I feel a burning "L" on my forehead, and that don't mean "liberal."

But now, it's critical that we get over it and get moving, because in the end, it's the 2008 election, not this one, that matters. Republicans suffered an even greater disappointment in 1998 when they lost seats

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in a year when history dictated that they would gain. And two years later, with a major assist from the U.S. Supreme Court, they got the big prize.

Lord knows there will be plenty of postmortem analyses of what it all means and where we go from here, but here is this donkey's advice to our leaders in Washington.

First off, show a little humility. It's tempting to indulge in accusations of Diebold conspiracies, dirty tricks, shadowy last-minute cash, and (more accurately) negative Republican attack ads and conservative fear-mongering. Don't go there. For whatever reasons, voters chose to elect enough Republicans to maintain GOP congressional majorities, and they won't respond well to suggestions that they are dumb sheep. Accept the unpalatable idea that Democrats, rightly or wrongly, are perceived as untrustworthy on national security. That's true, despite Democratic efforts to identify with the deep public concern about the disastrous course of events in Iraq. If it wasn't, the GOP fear-mongering wouldn't have worked.

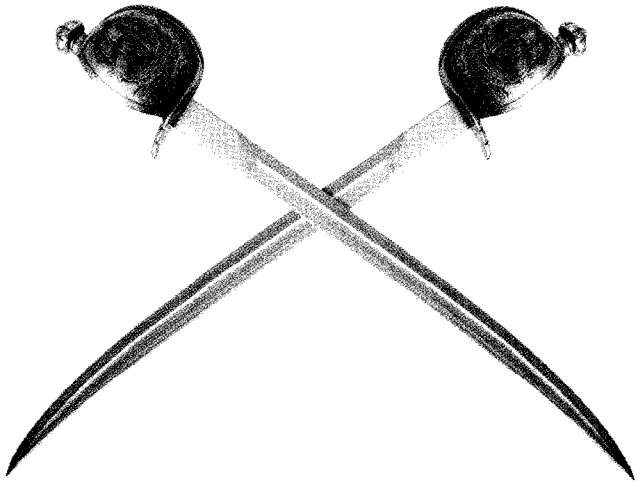
Second, don't reinforce the image of Democrats as unherdable cats by getting into a lot of finger-pointing or purges. Those Democrats who have ideological issues with Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), dating back to the Clinton administration will undoubtedly want to pin the blame on Rahmbo. Sure, some of the DCCC's decisions might have been erroneous in retrospect (though the main complaint, that Rahm didn't spend enough money in previously safe Republican seats to ensure a giant landslide, seems a bit moot today). But the fact remains that we went into this election with an unprecedented batch of good candidates, a better financial situation vis-à-vis the opposition in living memory, and a battleground expanded enough to make victory—a contingency considered extremely unlikely earlier this year—a real expectation. Our disappointment is so acute precisely because our campaign leaders did so much better than many of their predecessors at setting the stage. Similarly, I urge Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) to abandon his challenge to House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (R-Md.). Whether you like Steny or not (I do like him), there's no rational case for blaming him for the result.

Third, congressional leaders, take a back seat for a while. We all got seduced by favorable poll numbers, but the numbers we should have focused on were those showing that voters who disliked Republican congressmen weren't that jazzed about Democratic congressmen, either. Now our party will be defined by our 2008 candidate. Don't make things harder for him or her. Given the obvious antipathy of the electorate for Washington in general, try to defer when possible to Democrats outside Washington, particularly our fine batch of Democratic governors. Defer as well to the national Democratic need for a positive agenda on every issue going into 2008. This will be a choice between two parties, not just a referendum on George W. Bush. An opposition party in Congress that only shrieks and opposes will not be an asset two years from now.

Fourth, commit yourselves anew to a political reform agenda. If you're going to be the "out" party in Congress for yet another two years, then it's time to finally reject the prerogatives of institutional power and go for broke on a platform of redistricting reform, ethics reform, lobbying reform, and campaign-finance reform. Perhaps most important will be reform of a gerrymandering system that, in the end, saved this Republican-controlled Congress by requiring Democrats to win a historically unusual percentage of competitive seats.

Fifth, and finally, cheer up. In many respects, controlling Congress would have been a mixed blessing, implicating Democrats in every bad federal-government decision and helping insulate Republicans from accountability for their many bad deeds over the last six years. Almost no matter what we do, Democrats will be the "change" party in 2008. And there's no reason whatsoever to believe that the new Republican Congress will be any more honest, responsible, or effective than the old Republican Congress, which limped across the finish line and claimed a near-death experience as a new lease on life.

Ed Kilgore is vice president for policy at the Democratic Leadership Council.



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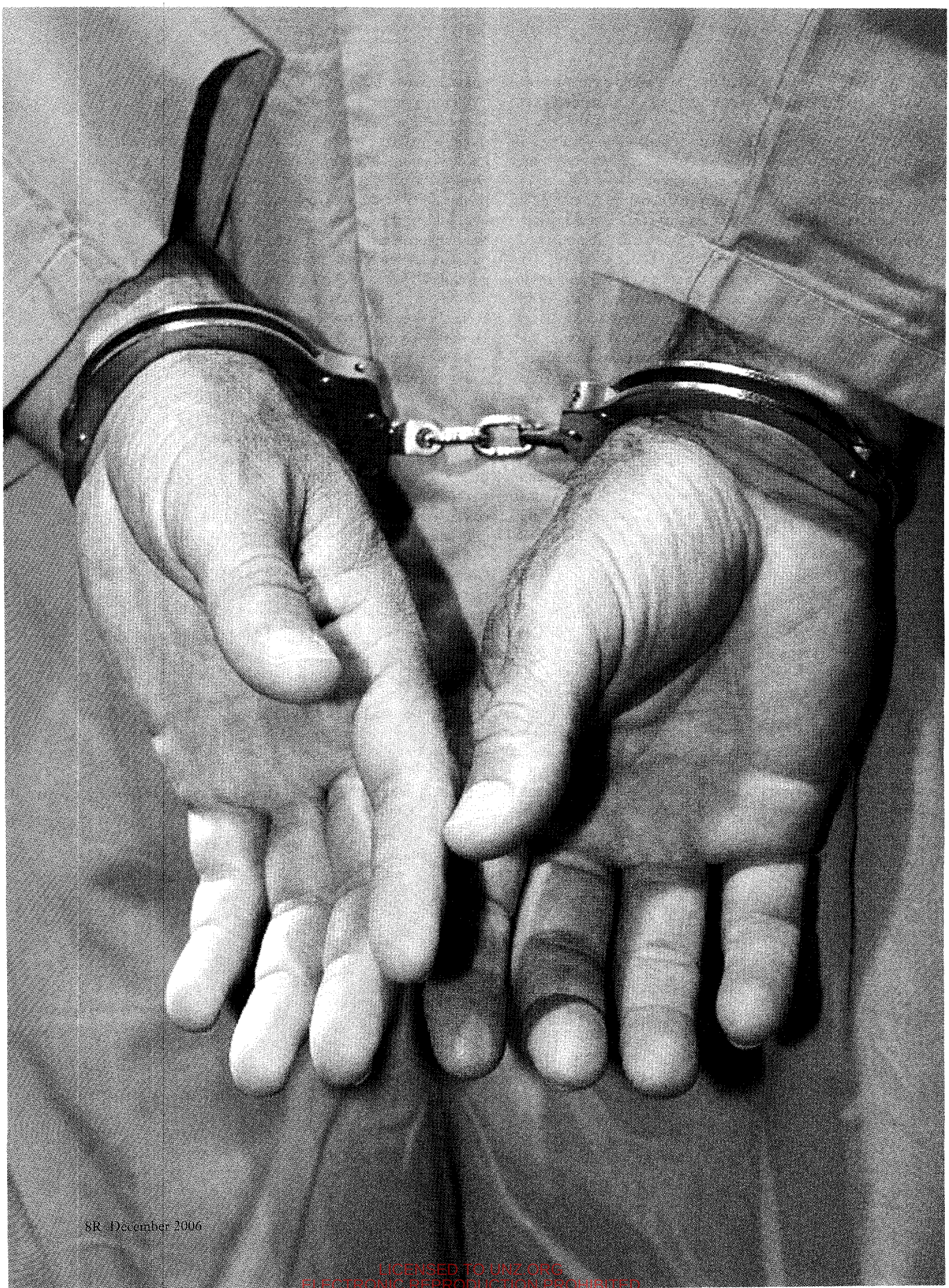

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It's a reprieve not a pardon

By David Greenberg

Despite taking a big hit at the polls, Republicans (and the commentariat) are already starting to read their better-than-expected showing as a kind of victory. They're suggesting that Americans aren't really fed up with GOP complacency and arrogance, that the party's governing formula only needs tweaking, not rethinking. But, as history suggests, that would be the wrong lesson to take.

Consider what happened in 1966. That year, it was the Democrats who entered the midterm election in firm control of the White House, both chambers of Congress, and the Supreme Court. Liberalism dominated the political landscape then as surely as conservatism dominates today. President Lyndon Johnson and his allies in Congress had recently achieved a host of triumphs: the Civil Rights Act, Medicare and Medicaid, Food Stamps and Head Start, and the Voting Rights Act, with its principle of "one man, one vote." The liberal Warren Court was also issuing landmark decisions, including the Miranda ruling safeguarding rights of the accused, and the Griswold decision ensuring privacy rights.

Just as George W. Bush had popular support for many of his programs before running afoul of public sentiment, so too did Lyndon Johnson. Not one of the Great Society achievements listed above was ever reversed. But growing numbers of Americans did start to think that Washington was going too far. Urban crime was worsening, racial integration was roiling neighborhoods, and taxes were increasing—all feeding what was soon dubbed a "backlash" against liberalism. In the 1966 elections, Republican candidates sought to capitalize on these discontents. They stumped against "crime in the streets," denounced housing laws that they claimed would force racial integration, and stoked outrage over urban riots.

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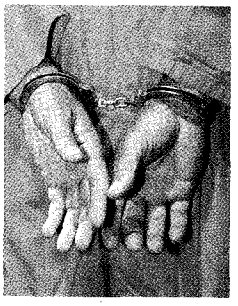

The strategy worked. In November, the GOP netted 47 seats in the House and three in the Senate. The Democrats held on to their majorities, but a signal had been sent. Only 21 of 48 pro-Johnson freshmen elected in the president's 1964 landslide survived—an indication that the high tide of liberalism was receding. House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.) taunted the president: "It's going to be rough going for him around here," he said. "Congress will write the laws, not the executive branch." It's a sentiment—part bluster, part recognition of the rebuke sent to the president—that you could imagine Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) or Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) articulating soon.

Around the country, other signs of voter misgivings with liberal dominance were emerging. In California, a politically untested former movie star turned the riots in Watts and the mayhem at the University of California into an indictment of liberal leadership, ousting the incumbent Pat Brown to become governor. Ronald Reagan would lead the fledgling conservative movement for another two decades. Republicans then buzzed with excitement at the thought of new blood filling their leadership ranks, much as Democrats today hope that a new crop of young governors and senators, from Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) to Eliot Spitzer to Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), will chart a new course for their party in the future.

Today's Republicans would do well to note how long it took Democrats to assimilate the lessons of their 1966 defeats. For the most part, they didn't attempt to tack back to the center. With some notable exceptions—such as acquiescing in a draconian crime bill in 1968—they kept promoting an expansive vision of government that included controversial planks such as busing, affirmative action, greater welfare benefits, and a focus on the root causes of crime instead of harsh punishment. In 1969, Kevin Phillips described an "emerging Republican majority." But instead of stanching the tide of defections to the GOP, Democrats allowed them to continue into the 1970s and 1980s.

Most historians look back on the 1970s, particularly George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign, as a time when the party failed to heed signals that its policies, especially on social issues, had strayed too far from majority sentiment. The right was then able to paint liberals as out-of-touch elites who had grown arrogant with power. White Southerners, neoconservative intellectuals, and the white working-class voters later known as Reagan Democrats all drifted away from their former party as the Democrats stuck with policies and rhetoric that kept them on the losing side of rising demographic trends.

While it's simplistic to believe that history repeats itself, there are signs that the Republicans who first made strides toward political power in 1966 may now have reached their Waterloo. With the addition of John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court, they control all three branches of government. Like the Democrats in 1966, however, Republicans are showing telltale signs of having grown arrogant with power themselves, unable to take a hint from restless voters.

Modern conservatives' contempt for investment in cities and in environmental protection made the impact of Hurricane Katrina far worse than it had to be. Their plan to privatize Social Security—a New Deal cornerstone on which millions of Americans vitally depend—hit a brick wall of popular opposition. In this wealthiest of nations, it turns out, people actually want the government to keep providing basic safeguards against economic strain, illness, and the predations of business.

Besides the public's support for social provisions, today's Republicans have underestimated the public's tolerance. Siding with religious fundamentalists, the GOP made a federal issue of Terri Schiavo's case, failing to appreciate most Americans' wish for privacy in such matters. And while gay marriage remains unpopular, on the more important question about whether to accept openly gay people in society, the Republicans hold a losing hand. Younger Americans show declining levels of anti-gay sentiment. In another generation, current conservative attitudes on homosexuality—as well as on birth control, euthanasia, and other social issues—may well seem as retrograde as overt anti-Semitism and racism seem today. If John Judis and Ruy Teixeira are right, the hard-line intolerants will be the ones caught on the wrong side of an emerging Democratic majority.

Perhaps absolute power does corrupt absolutely. The White House's abuses, such as spying on citizens and depriving suspected terrorists of basic human rights like habeas corpus, are today triggering fear outside the usual civil-libertarian circles. Bush's updating of Richard Nixon's theory—if the president does it, that means it's not illegal—isn't likely to sit well even among conservative Democrats and independents, even those who may oppose gun control or abortion.

This fall's GOP losses show serious public concern that George W. Bush and the conservative movement, entrusted with great power, have violated that trust. Four decades ago, Americans sent the same hint to overreaching liberals, who then suffered for a quarter century—with declining electoral fortunes, a deteriorating public image, and ebbing power—before finally getting the message.

David Greenberg is a professor at Rutgers University and the author of *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*.

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Cheer up, the end is near

By Mark Schmitt

The modern Republican Party has shown itself to be, once again, the master of the close call. Reversing a double-digit deficit in the generic congressional polls three weeks before the election, facing near certain loss of both the House and Senate, the party strategically abandoned its most vulnerable candidates in order to target a massive wave of negative ads on just enough districts and states to retain a miniscule majority in both houses.

It is a truism that U.S. elections are decided on a winner-take-all basis, but the Republicans take that truism quite literally. A narrow victory is as good as a landslide, since the power it confers is the same. They seem to think that it's actually better to win by a narrow margin, because every vote over 50 percent plus one is, in a sense, wasted. In Congress, every piece of major legislation seems to come down to a late-night flurry over whether wavering Republicans will come back to the fold, and yet come back they always do, to give the bill a one- or two-vote margin. This isn't an accident; it's a strategy. Whereas legislative leaders in the past wanted big bipartisan victories to ensure a lasting base of support for their policies, the modern

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Republicans seem to view those extra votes as money left on the table, or as compromises that didn't need to be made.

The same strategy has reached into the electoral arena. Whereas every previous president with an ambitious agenda sought a reelection margin as affirming as Reagan's in 1984, Bush's innovation was to recognize that you get no more power from an affirmative 49-state victory with 60 percent of the vote than from a narrow win based largely on disqualifying your opponent. This year, Republicans looked disaster in the eye. But rather than changing anything about their message to regain an affirmative mandate, they squeaked by again, doing whatever it took to disqualify just enough Democratic challengers. The "median voter" toward whom both parties supposedly gravitate—as political scientists have been telling us for 50 years—was once again forgotten as the strategy of mobilizing an angry base succeeded.

It's a brilliant strategy as long as it works. But eventually, it will become apparent that the normal rules of the game were there for a reason. Without a broad mandate, power alone was not enough to get Bush's Social Security plan moving. It wasn't enough to permanently resolve the distinctions between social and economic conservatives that comprise the majority. And it won't be enough to prevent the crackup that will soon finish off the era of Republican dominance.

For the moment, all eyes will be on the failure of the Democratic Party, once again, to overcome the money, shamelessness, and mastery of political mechanics of the Republicans. In addition to all the internal fights and finger-pointing, it's possible that the Democratic coalition will actually break up, with Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) carrying off a small band of conservatives, and liberals who had only recently become enthusiastic about the party heading to some other structure.

But the Republican coalition will break apart, too. For the most part, it's already broken, held together only by the fear of what a Democratic majority with the power to investigate would have revealed. As Bush becomes a lame duck and the presidential race begins without a consensus nominee, a party that has papered over every choice about its direction will meet reality.

The crisis of the religious conservatives is the first spark. They were promised so much, they believe they were responsible for all the GOP victories since 2000, and they believe they have gotten almost nothing they wanted. On top of that, there will be a clash within the religious right, as there are those who never wanted to become so deeply involved in ordinary politics.

Then there will be the opposite of the religious right—the fiscally conservative, socially moderate Republicans who might coalesce around a figure like Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). But that faction also has two branches: the truly radical fiscal conservatives, who still want to shut down government agencies, and the more responsible business types, such as McCain and Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), who think government has a role to play. Layer on top of that the divisions on foreign policy that will emerge as George W. Bush becomes a lame duck, and all the ingredients are there for a two-or three-way splintering of the party.

One faction of a splintered party might even lead to the creation of a third party: One can imagine McCain, if rejected by social conservatives for the Republican presidential nomination, allying with Lieberman on an independent candidacy. With the Democratic Party in crisis, and a Republican nominee markedly too conservative for the country (Newt Gingrich, for example), such a third-party ticket—made up of people who can claim they were rejected by the ideologues in both their parties—would have a superficial appeal. The problem with it is simply that it would be a very, very conservative party, not a centrist alternative at all. McCain is no moderate, and never claimed to be one. And Lieberman's strained relationship with the Democratic Party, it has become apparent, has nothing to do with the party and everything to do with his own journey toward deep neoconservatism.

Among the remaining Republicans, the most appealing option should be that described by the young conservative writers Reihan Salam and Ross Douthat- in their article in *The Weekly Standard*, "The Party of Sam's Club": Acknowledge that the socially conservative working-class white families who make up the Republican voting base actually need something from government, and that if you're worried about strong families, the best thing you can do is to ensure that they have health care and a measure of economic security. But as intellectually sensible as that argument is, it goes against the grain of elite Republican thought, which would rather deal with social conservatives through symbolism, and would drop such voters entirely if it could.

The Republican logic for most of the last five years has been that power is its own justification. Questions of purpose and unity were subsumed beneath the underlying questions of "us or them," "friend or enemy." But one more victory will unleash all those forces, claims, and frustrations buried under that strange view of the world.

Mark Schmitt is a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation and a columnist for *The American Prospect*.

Why is the next page upside-down? Flip to the front cover to see.

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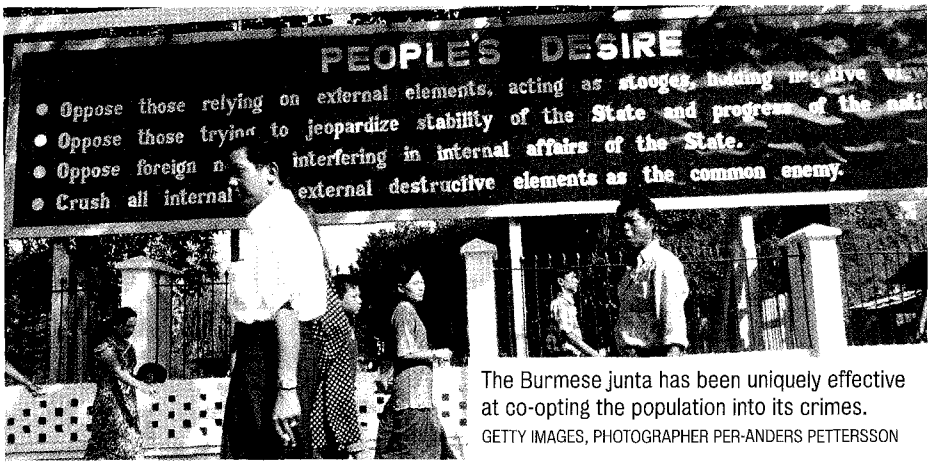
leaders can manipulate. The regime has certainly proven skillful at manufacturing enemies, constantly reminding the public of the (now fatally weakened) ethnic insurgents in Burma's hinterlands. And perhaps, as both authors note, Britain's imperial rule—which tore apart traditional institutions, and helped accustom the population to misrule—set the stage for dictatorship.

But other Asian countries had similar birth pangs. Many are conglomerations of numerous pre-modern kingdoms—India itself contains so many civilizations that crossing the borders between some Indian states feels like entering different countries. And British rule in Malaysia, Singapore, and India was no less cruel than it was in Burma, but those nations have gone on to build relatively liberal societies. Other Asian dictatorships—Indonesia under Suharto, for example—have manufactured enemies as a justification for military repression. Still, that was not enough to stop an Indonesian democracy movement that gathered force in the late 1990s. And citizens of other countries in the region also witnessed firsthand the chaos that can result from freedom—in both the 1970s and early 1990s, the Thai military killed protesters in the streets—but continued to push for democratization, often successfully.

There are two additional factors that neither author adequately explores. First, the Burmese junta has been uniquely effective at co-opting the population into its crimes. Since the late 1980s, the regime has more than doubled the size of the military, building a parallel social-welfare system for servicemen and their dependents. In this way, the government has forced a high percentage of the population to rely on the army. Through their brothers, sons, and fathers they can gain access to a level of medical care, schooling, and even food that most ordinary Burmese cannot. But in return, they must sell themselves—by informing on neighbors, sending their sons to military indoctrination, and committing thousands of other small crimes against their own conscience.

The regime also has tolerant neighbors. Thant Myint-U, along with some other scholars, argues that the modern sanctions-based approach towards Burma, favored by Western democracies, has been misguided. Sanctions, he contends, only further impoverish an already poor country, and play into Burmese xenophobia. Perhaps, but at least the United States, Britain, and their allies have a clearly defined Burma policy. By comparison, Burma's near neighbors, the most important outside actors in this tragedy, have none at all. Japan has at times joined the American call for pressure on Burma, and at other times has offered it virtually unconditional aid. In Indonesia and Thailand, some liberal politicians have expressed sympathy for Burmese democrats, but in recent years the Thai government has launched what it calls a "good neighbor" policy toward the generals, defending Burma's abysmal record on human rights. India, the world's largest democracy, has offered Burma soft loans and infrastructure aid, even rolling out the red carpet for a state visit by Burmese leader Than Shwe. China, meanwhile, has also provided soft loans, and has sold Burma a range of new military hardware.

Indeed, Burma is now exporting its pathologies—drugs, HIV, economic migrants—across international frontiers. But, though democracy has swept through Asia in recent years, the country's neighbors have not yet recognized that a democratic Burma would offer more stability, and a better business climate, than the current regime. Burma's leaders know they don't need to worry about American sanctions because of Burma's growing links to other nations. "We have good relations with all our neighbors and that is what is important," Burma's foreign minister told reporters earlier this year. If only other Asian countries would understand this.



The Burmese junta has been uniquely effective at co-opting the population into its crimes.
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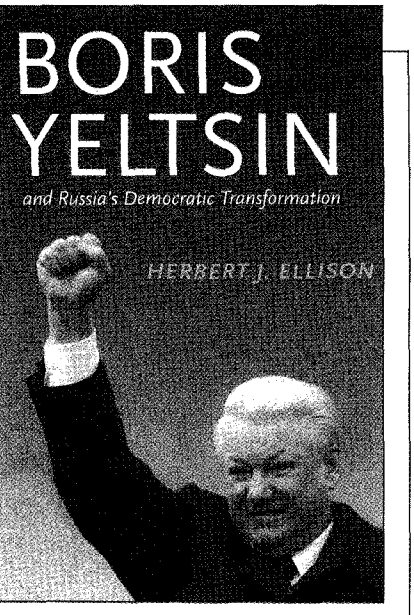
Joshua Kurlantzick is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



"Much has been written about Yeltsin, but rarely has it been as balanced and insightful as this book." – **Strobe Talbott**

Boris Yeltsin and Russia's Democratic Transformation, by Herbert J. Ellison
Jackson School Publications in International Studies. November 2006. 320 pages, 20 illustrations, $30.00 cloth

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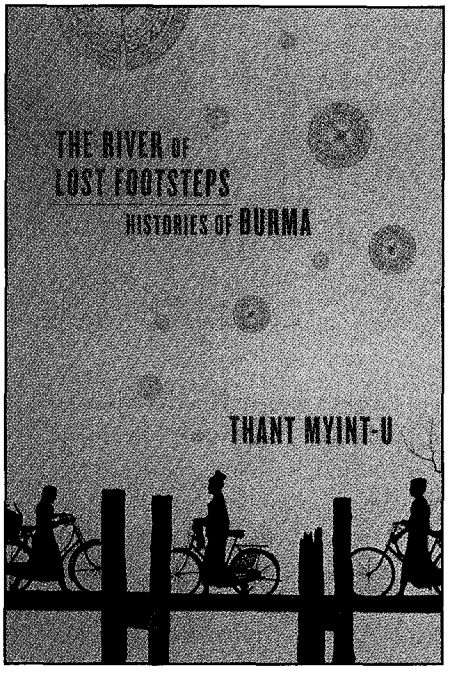
Burmese towns, Larkin masterfully exhumes the grotesque, evoking the horror of everyday life through small details: a hungry priest who, out of obligation to a visitor, offers Larkin a rare slice of cake, then quickly wraps it up after she declines, so that she cannot change her mind. A Rangoon teashop where, at night, servers sleep in a "tangled pile of arms, legs, and *longyi*," the Burmese sarong. Schools so poor that chemistry students must watch as a teacher draws a picture of a test tube.

In Mandalay, Burma's second city, Larkin joins an informal book club, whose members practice a kind of resistance through literature. Today, despite official censorship, the pavement on Booksellers' Lane in Rangoon is crowded with people thumbing through weathered second-hand novels. Indeed, on my own trips to Burma I have been startled by the number of people who want to discuss Faulkner or Dickens.

Larkin also uses her travels to examine the foundations of Orwell's writing and politics. In 1925, Orwell served as a low-level imperial policeman in Insein (pronounced "insane"), an area near Rangoon famed for its brutal prison, which could drive inmates literally mad. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he described the "wretched prisoners squatting in the reeking cages of the lock-ups ... the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos." At Insein, Larkin suggests, Orwell turned away from the romanticism of Kipling, who had supported the often ruthless mechanisms of state control as a vital part of imperialism. Unlike Kipling, Orwell spent considerable time working in the guts of the British Burmese colonial machine, and he understood that scenes like those he witnessed at Insein were all too common. Today, Insein prison is more crowded than ever—it reportedly houses more than 10,000 political prisoners and other enemies of the state—and inmates are tortured in ways even the harshest British sahibs probably never imagined.



The River of Lost Footsteps
By Thant Myint-U
$25, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

How the mighty have fallen

Thant Myint-U spends less time on the ground in Burma today, and instead traces the arc of the country's history. He goes back thousands of years, but focuses mainly on the last days of the Burmese kings, and the period of British rule from the late 19th century until World War II. Thant Myint-U's narrative is full of rich details and colorful characters like Bayinnaung, a 16th-century king who led a mighty elephant corps into battle, defeating neighboring Siam (modern-day Thailand). At times, the reader struggles under the weight of all the names and anecdotes, but Thant Myint-U makes a strong case that Burma once rivaled China and India as a cultural and political power. When, in the 12th century, the Burmese kingdom dealt with the "haughty Chinese imperial court," he notes, it was treated with the respect offered the world's other great dynasties. If it could somehow be set on a different course, Thant Myint-U suggests, Burma could once again become an important player in Asia.

That day appears far off, though. Burma is home to the world's longest-running civil war, an ethnic conflict in the eastern part of the country between minorities like the Karen, and the army—which is dominated by Burmans, the country's ethnic majority. Fighting began just after the World War II and continues to this day. In addition, the years of British rule had weakened many of the country's traditional institutions of authority, even before invasions during the war—by the Japanese, the Americans, and the Chinese Communist forces—produced further instability. The result was lawlessness: In 1940, Rangoon had a murder rate comparable to a typical American city in the 1990s. This power vacuum would ultimately be filled by the Burmese military.

Public acquiescence has also played a role. Since the end of colonial rule, Thant Myint-U suggests, freedom has produced only chaos and turbulence. In 1988, massive street protests in Burma toppled one military government and set the stage for the election in 1990. But those protests came at a violent cost: The military gunned down hundreds, even thousands, of demonstrators, some of whom, in turn, hacked suspected government agents to death. By the end of the protests, he writes, "the country was at once outraged and exhausted. The revolutionary moment was over."

Bad neighbors

Ultimately, neither book provides a satisfying answer to this central question: How do the Burmese generals, a thuggish and largely uneducated bunch, resist the spread of democracy, even though their population reads books, follows world events on the radio, and has been willing to protest in the past?

History, as seen through George Orwell or ancient Burmese kings, provides some guidance, but only some. Perhaps, as Thant Myint-U suggests, Burma's history of foreign invasion has created a widespread xenophobia that

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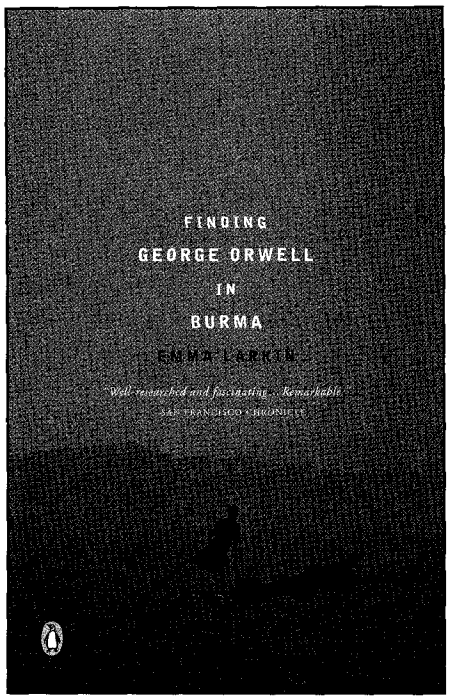
Regime Unchanged

How Burma's ruling junta has endured.



Finding George Orwell In Burma
By Emma Larkin
$15, Penguin

By Joshua Kurlantzick

The Southeast Asian nation of Burma—also known as Myanmar—lies in the heart of the world's most dynamic region, in which 500 million people have been lifted out of poverty in recent decades, and one dictatorship after another has fallen. Thanks in part to the Buddhist commitment to education, over 80 percent of the Burmese people are literate. And in recent years a charismatic advocate for Burmese democracy has attained widespread popular support.

And yet, here are the sorry facts about Burma, a country I have visited numerous times, despairing more and more on each trip: The State Department puts its per capita income at less than $2000. Hunger and crime are persistent problems, and disabled beggars crowd downtown Rangoon, Burma's largest city. In 2000, the World Health Organization ranked Burma's health-care system as the second-worst in the world, ahead of only Sierra Leone.

Since 1962, Burma has been run by the military. Despite brief glimmerings of hope for the pro-democracy opposition, the ruling junta remains as firmly entrenched as ever. Convinced, as authoritarian governments often are, that it was genuinely popular, the regime allowed a relatively free parliamentary election in 1990, the first in three decades. But when the pro-democracy party swept the polls, the regime annulled the results. Since then, the party's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been repeatedly put under house arrest. In 2003, pro-regime thugs attacked her convoy, killing members of her entourage, and she was placed under house arrest, where she remains. Today, her party lies in shambles, many of its leaders jailed. The State Department's most recent annual report on human rights—which rarely uses such unequivocal language—asserted, "The government continued to rule by decree and was not bound by any constitutional provisions."

How did this educated country move from post-World War II independence to authoritarianism? And how has the regime endured for almost a half century, even as other Asian nations have moved toward openness and democracy? Two new books, *Finding George Orwell in Burma* by Emma Larkin, a pseudonym for a veteran Southeast-Asia journalist; and *The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma* by Thant Myint-U, a Burmese historian, use different methods to suggest an answer. Larkin tries to explain Burma by traveling the country in the footsteps of the young George Orwell, who served there in the 1920s as a member of the British imperial police force. Thant, meanwhile, leads the reader through centuries of Burmese history with the goal of discovering "what the past might say about the present."

Larkin clearly knows and loves Burma, and she concentrates on how the post-1990 stasis has affected ordinary Burmese. One benefit of following Orwell's colonial career is that it gets Larkin out of Rangoon and leads her to delve deeply into people's lives. In small

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innovation, the Post Office, and implement Vote by Mail (VBM). Reverse the dynamic: bring the ballot to the voter.

Since 2000, Oregon has conducted all elections by mail, sending a ballot to every registered voter about two weeks before election. Voters can return the ballot by mail or deliver it to an official election site. To prevent fraud, voters must sign the outer envelope. All signatures must be matched to actual voter registration cards before the ballots can be processed. In the 2004 election, Oregon's voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters was 85 percent—the highest in the United States. Even more dramatic, the seemingly dismal 39-percent turnout of registered voters in our state primary also appears to be the nation's highest—compared to states such as Illinois at 21 percent; Pennsylvania at 19 percent, Texas at 10 percent, and Virginia at 4 percent. (By the way, the median age of those who actually voted in Oregon's primary was 60.)

Actually, citizens in all 50 states already vote by mail. More than 80 percent of Washington State voters will cast ballots this way in 2006: In California and several other states, well over 50 percent will do the same.

Rubin's take on Vote by Mail? A casually dismissive half-sentence: "Oregon, where citizens vote by postal mail—another terribly insecure system." Here again, Rubin, like so many other election reformers, falls into the trap of making the (unattainable) perfect the enemy of the good.

Could an individual voter theoretically scam Vote by Mail? Sure—as you can any system. Evidence it's happened in Oregon? One person convicted of forging his wife's signature; another, of voting twice. More to the point: In stark contrast to a DRE world, even if individual or small-scale fraud were to occur, by design a VBM system disperses the risk, rather than concentrates it.

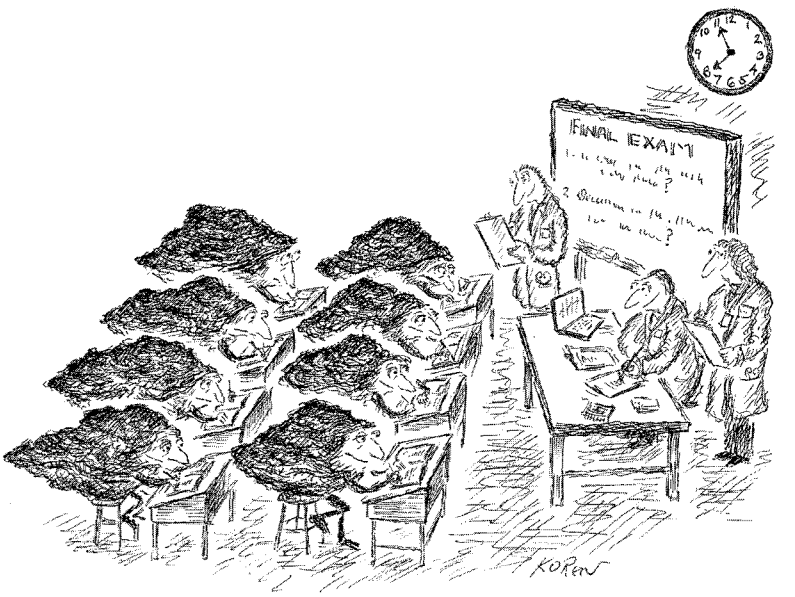
Vote by Mail is good for participation. It's simple to understand. Recounts are easy—by definition, there's a direct paper trail for every vote. And face it. If election night brings rain, snow, or sleet—or sick kids and dinner to get on the table—many (maybe most?) voters would be relieved to know their votes had already been cast by mail. (Question for pundits: What's the "message" voters will be sending if Election 2008 is literally decided by unusually bad weather?)

Today's national debate about how we should vote is still such a sad mix of fossilized thinking laced with bipartisan paranoia. Let's brace ourselves for a flurry of post-election accusations and lawsuits, that might make Florida 2000 look tame by comparison. (Perhaps even pray for one side to win so big, it won't matter as much.) And then, the day after, start figuring this out for real.

Phil Keisling, a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*, served as Oregon's secretary of state from 1991 until 1999. He is currently senior vice president for marketing and business development at Hepieric, Inc.

LEGAL SEA FOODS

Passing the Oyster Bar



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A recent study for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission concluded there was little evidence of the type of polling-place fraud that so alarms the GOP. (This report's release has been delayed for months, reportedly by the EAC's Republican members.)

Since "absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence," to quote Donald Rumsfeld, GOP elected officials are undeterred in trying to impose new, restrictive regulations supposedly meant to combat this phantom threat. For example, Georgia and Arizona have passed laws to require photo identification to register and even vote. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed similar legislation—also mostly along party lines.

These bills have a surface appeal, but quickly raise a host of thorny questions. Must it be a driver's license or other state-issued ID? Can you show a Costco card? A utility bill (with a picture?) And since we're now taking extra time at the polls, longer lines, anyone?

And what about the tens of millions of voters casting absentee ballots? Party operatives, including many Republicans are strongly encouraging people to vote absentee as part of their get-out-the-vote strategies. So now we put photo IDs into the ballot envelopes—and, uh, anyone out there thinking about identity theft?

Fortunately, federal courts have moved quickly to end this nonsense—a superior court judge struck down the Georgia law requiring voters to produce a state-issued voter ID at the polls.

Assume, for a moment, the purest of motives, and focus on the Republicans' ostensible logic. It's not enough to have stiff penalties, or adopt refinements such as random spot checks of voter registration rolls against other government databases. We must prevent that last 0.0001 percent of possible fraud. The goal of a pure, fraud-free election system demands that we do whatever it takes—however cumbersome and expensive.

This is not unlike the worldview that Rubin ultimately embraces, too. As a computer scientist, Rubin literally lives in a world of digital certainty, of ones and zeroes precisely arrayed to produce a desired result. Little wonder the idealist in him seeks a totally secure voting machine, a totally fraud-proof electoral process. But elections, by definition, are inherently incapable of being fraud-proof and 100-percent secure. And this is key: After a certain point, efforts to make them so do more harm than good.

A good analogy comes from the biological world. Healthy adults have small quantities of dangerous bacteria in our blood. Yet prescribing massive doses of antibiotics to kill them would ultimately compromise our immune system's natural abilities to counter these and other threats. What kills the bad stuff can also kill the good stuff.

So too with voting. The ability to cast a ballot is the essential democratic freedom. Trying to make the voting process 100-percent error proof inevitably diminishes that freedom. The key to dealing with election fraud is not its elimination, but its strict containment.

Mailing it in

So where does Rubin's quest for the "Perfect DRE" lead him? On page 249, he describes the system he finds most promising. It's the brainchild of cryptographer David Chaum.

"Voters receive two ballots with the candidates' names in different order. Voters mark one of the ballots and keep the other one. Since the authorities running the election would not know which ballot each voter marked, the ballot the voter keeps can be used, through some mathematical manipulations invented by Chaum, to keep the election honest. Furthermore, the marked ballot can be stored in such a way that the voter is able to verify that the vote was counted in the final tally, and the tally can be performed by anyone."

Got that? At least Rubin has the grace to concede that "the details of Chaum's scheme are too complex and technical to list here, and therein lies the rub. . . . A fundamental problem would remain: the public would not understand how the mechanism works."

Bingo. If the public doesn't understand its own election system, what's to make citizens suddenly believe again in the integrity of that system? Would we then start issuing ballots in triplicate and concoct new, ever more complex algorithms? Rubin's logic leads us to ever more sophisticated, technology-centric processes, to fix a problem that's created by an inordinate reliance on complex technology.

The biggest threat to the health of our democracy is low —and declining— voter participation. Even the atypically high turnout in the 2004 presidential election amounted to just over 50 percent of eligible citizens casting ballots. Midterm elections are now attracting just 35-40 percent participation. Far, far worse are primary elections, those largely overlooked "first-round" contests where the vast majority of candidates who win the dominant party's nomination are virtual shoo-ins for November. This is now 90 percent of Congress' 435 seats, and perhaps an even higher proportion of our 7,382 state legislative seats. For these contests, turnout has been truly abysmal—in many states 5 to 15 percent of the eligible population.

Various voter suppression tactics (legal and otherwise) contribute to this problem. But the most effective voter suppression tactic is something most Americans consider an untouchable icon: the polling place itself.

In 49 states, the basic premise of elections is that the citizen needs to come to the ballot—and not the other way around. So reformers like Rubin focus on building a better (and more expensive) DRE. Others suggest "early voting" options with additional workers and polling stations set up for days or weeks before Election Day itself. Some even advocate a new national holiday—all to get more voters to come to the ballot.

In other words, spend even more money—and create more opportunities for error (and yes, even fraud) as you rely on ever-more complex machines, and even more temporary (often, ill-trained) workers needing to be vigilant at more locations for longer hours.

Far better than going even farther down this rathole (with or without DREs) is to look at an 18th-century

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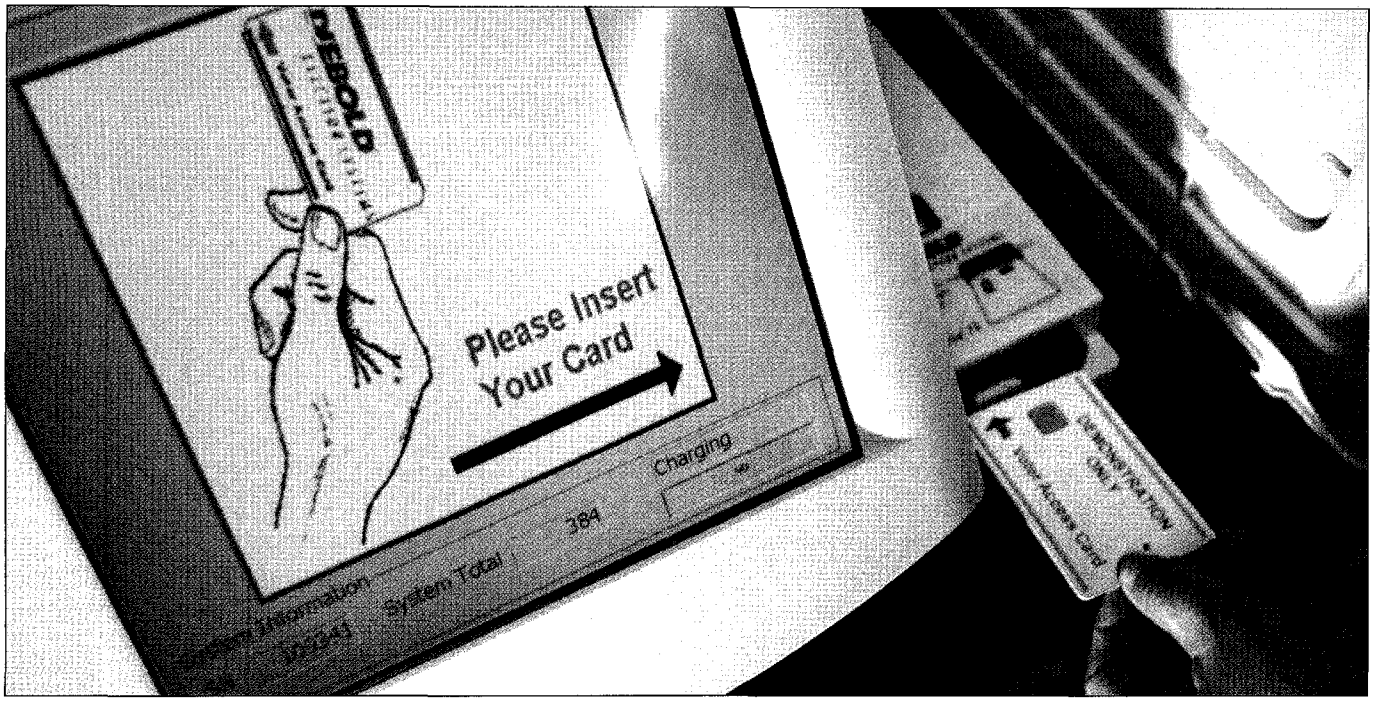

GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID MCNEW

with the importance of a paper trail. (During my tenure, we conducted three major election recounts for Congress, the U.S. Senate, and a contentious statewide ballot initiative.) I'm thankful Oregon is one of the few states where DREs are virtually nonexistent (more on that later).

But is there any tangible evidence, after more than 100 million votes cast on DREs, that a deliberate fraud has actually occurred in any election to date? Rubin offers no specific example. In fairness, his critique doesn't require one. But by focusing on the specter of significant electronic voting fraud, Rubin's critique of America's election system suffers from an even bigger mistake than confusing the elephant's tail with its trunk. In an unintended, but nonetheless real way, Rubin—not to mention the deep conspiracy theorists from whom he distances himself—has fed a hyperactive (and bipartisan) obsession with the perfect election system that ultimately endangers our ability to revitalize the very essence of our democratic system, which is voter participation.

The biggest problem in American elections isn't deliberate fraud. It's garden-variety human error. Election officials keenly understand that mistakes and malfunctioning systems (technical and human) wreak far more havoc than actual fraud. (Al Gore literally lost thousands of Florida votes thanks to the infamous "butterfly ballot" designed by a Democratic county clerk.)

Virtually every DRE problem to date—and there are some doozies—falls into this category. Red-faced election officials in Montgomery County, Md. (Rubin's home state) can't blame Diebold for the debacle during last September's primary when election workers forgot to send "voter access cards" to the polls. Voters were turned away, or simply left, because they couldn't wait any longer. In desperation, some poll workers gave voters blank pieces of paper for ballots.

The exquisite dilemma, of course, is that DREs, with or without VVPTs (Voter-Verified Paper Trails), won't go away overnight. Billions have been invested in them. As Rubin notes, voters actually like DREs' ATM-like convenience. And even as you read this, controversy and threatened litigation likely rage somewhere in America because one or more congressional candidates, short a few hundred or few thousand votes, will be crying foul.

May I see your Costco card?

No study reveals a strong Republican bias toward computer criminals who a) want to risk long prison sentences to commit election fraud and b) have the *Ocean's 11*-like skill to pull it off. However, the legitimate, if overblown, concern about DRE-related fraud seems to be almost exclusively voiced (so far) by Democrats.

While Democrats fear the machinations of Diebold et al., Republicans have their own version of electoral horror: those vast hordes of non-citizens and illegal immigrants (read: Democrats) eager to take advantage of open voter registration laws. This specter is just as ephemeral—and even less frightening.

The notion that widespread voter registration fraud exists is a long-standing obsession among many Republicans, who for the last few decades have fought virtually every innovation to help citizens overcome bureaucratic and logistical obstacles to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Sure, registration fraud can happen. But how often? In my home state of Oregon, with two million registered voters, we've had all of a dozen complaints of illegal registration in an entire decade. Exactly two miscreants were found, and both were prosecuted. (One was a British con artist; the other a confused Vietnamese woman.)

False registration is a felony in virtually every state. And just how stupid do people like Rush Limbaugh think illegal immigrants are to avoid being detected by immigration services—so they can then commit two deportable offenses by falsely registering and then voting?

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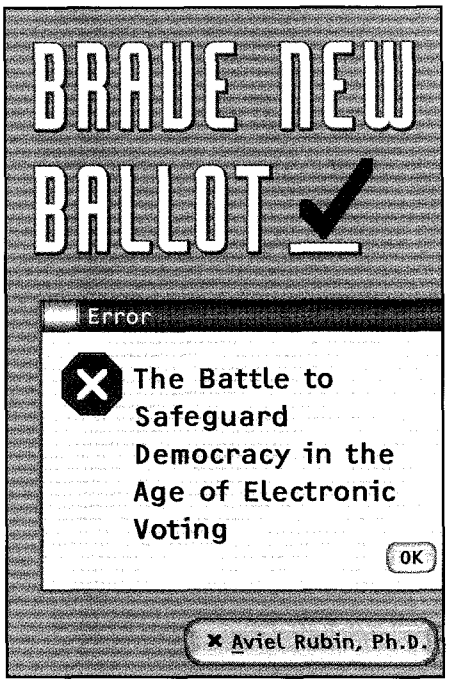
Election Fraud, American Style

The most effective voter suppression tool is the polling booth itself.



Brave New Ballot
By Aviel Rubin
$24.95, Morgan Road Books

By Phil Keisling

In July 2003, Aviel Rubin, an untenured Johns Hopkins computer-science professor, was asked to analyze some software source code purportedly used in the Accuvote TSx voting machine, manufactured by Diebold. The Ohio-based company is one of several major vendors of "Direct Recording Electronic" (DRE) voting machines that almost 30 million voters, in almost 40 states, will use in the 2006 election.

Rubin and several graduate students quickly realized that Diebold's code was rife with mistakes and vulnerabilities, and laughably easy to hack. Worse, since the same code seemed to underlie every Diebold machine, a skilled hacker could conceivably corrupt every Diebold machine in America. These "first-generation" DREs leave no paper trail; voters have to trust their ballots are being properly recorded and counted.

Rubin has written an engaging memoir of his three years in the vortex of electronic voting controversy. In *Brave New Ballot: The Battle to Safeguard Democracy in the Age of Electronic Voting*, there's unmistakably a "Mr. Rubin Goes to Washington" quality to his narrative arc. Smart, idealistic computer scientist gets outraged about a perceived wrong—and wades right into the shark-infested waters. There are billions of dollars at stake for the DRE vendors. Thousands of election officials have their reputations, even their careers, riding on the machines whose security and reliability Rubin is challenging.

Not that Rubin was a media naïf. Before leaking their report to *The New York Times*, his team spent several hours at a whiteboard coming up with pithy quips. Discomfited vendors and election officials initially belittled Rubin's "freshman homework assignment." When Rubin proved adept at rebutting critics' obfuscations at various public forums and legislative hearings, his integrity came under attack. Nothing like an "Aha! Conflict of interest!" angle—especially with a highly technical subject that few reporters truly understand—to distract from the heart of an issue. (Rubin failed to disclose he was an unpaid advisor, with stock options, for another e-voting company—though the firm was more a hopeful vendor to Diebold than a competitor.)

For Rubin and other critics of DREs, the nightmare scenario is this: Some diabolical (read: corporate and/or Republican) hacker figures out how to steal thousands of votes, in key congressional districts. What could we do? Would we even know? Without a paper trail, could we ever know who had really won?

As Oregon's secretary of state from 1991 until 1999, my job included oversight of elections, and I certainly agree

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part of the GOP fundraising effort. That February, Stone reports, Norquist wrote to DeLay, who'd just become majority whip. It "would probably be worthwhile for Jack Abramoff to stop by and brief you on the 'K' Street Project," Norquist wrote, adding that Abramoff "is moving his clients to help our side, both through PACs and through giving to our coalition groups." This might be considered the founding document of the K Street Project, Republicans' long-time strategy to purge key lobbying firms of Democrats and turn K Street into a GOP money machine. For Abramoff's entire lobbying career, his clients poured money into lawmakers' committee accounts, as well as into conservative groups like Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. In return, their needs were tended to. So it was that Ralph Reed, speaking to Stone in 2004— before Reed's ill-fated run for lieutenant governor of Georgia, but after he'd been paid some $6 million by Abramoff for consulting work—could say with a straight face that Abramoff had been no mere lobbyist, but "a strategist and builder of the Republican majority."

It's clear from *Heist* that Abramoff's enterprise, which for the most part worked fantastically, might still be buzzing along to this day if he had not so flagrantly defrauded his Indian clients. Abramoff, Stone argues, was neither a unique phenomenon (as K Street and the Republican leadership would have us believe), nor the predictable spawn of a corrupt culture (as government watchdogs would have it). Rather, he was a remarkably greedy lobbyist who thrived because over the last 10 years, Washington has increasingly come to run on money. He was a man of the times, but more so—more ambitious, more wily, a harder worker, and well, more corrupt.

Paul Kiel is a reporter/blogger for TPMmuckraker.com.

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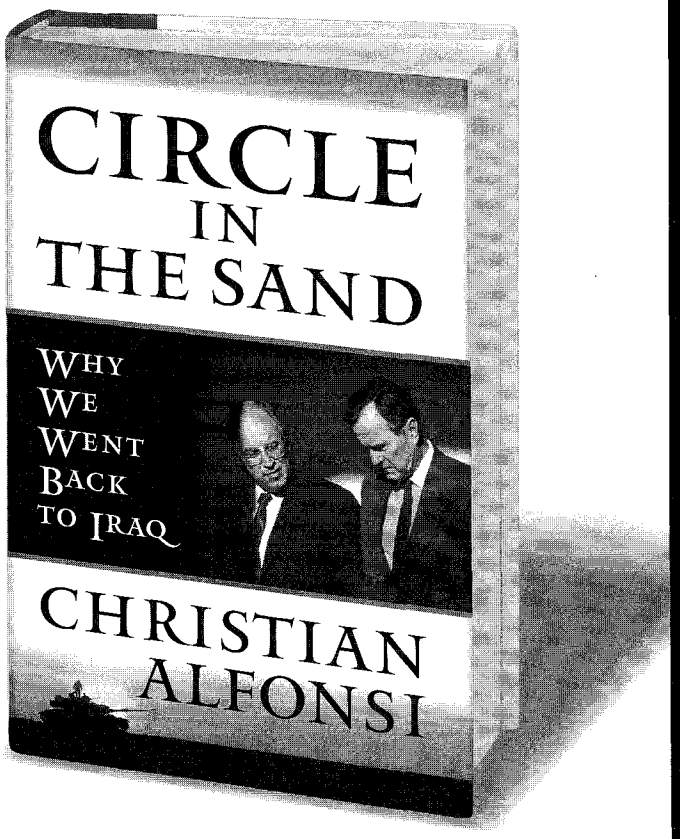

***"Circle in the Sand* goes to the heart of a national tragedy**—how two generations of Bush family mismanagement and inept strategy in Iraq may have doomed early-21st century American policy in the Middle East."
—KEVIN PHILLIPS, author of *American Theocracy* and *Wealth and Democracy*

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now fellow felons): Michael Scanlon, DeLay's former spokesman, who pled guilty last November to fraud and bribery; Tony Rudy, DeLay's former chief of staff, who pled guilty in March to conspiracy; along with Neil Volz, former chief of staff to Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), who pled guilty in May to conspiracy (Rep. Ney himself recently pleaded guilty to corruption charges). In June, the government secured its first conviction in the investigation—former General Services Administration chief of staff David Safavian, on charges that he had lied to ethics and Senate investigators about his dealings with Abramoff. And on Sept. 15, Ney admitted to accepting bribes from Abramoff and his associates.

Although it's a fun game to play, Stone does not spend much time speculating whom prosecutors will nab next (Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.)? Rep. John Doolittle (R-Calif.)? Former Deputy Secretary of the Interior J. Steven Griles?). Instead, he dissects, in admirably thorough fashion, the factors that allowed Abramoff to elevate his lobbying practice to such audacious heights.

Probably the most important thing to understand about Abramoff is his choice of clients. Abramoff, as a former colleague told Stone, wanted to make "a million a day"; another recounts that Abramoff "once talked of his desire to make $1 billion." So, unlike most top lobbyists, he didn't pursue blue-chip corporations or build a broad practice. Rather, as a former colleague from Preston Gates tells Stone, he "wanted clients where there was a lot at stake, so they could support a large financial effort." Abramoff preyed on wealthy, desperate entities, like Indian tribes nervous about losing a casino, or the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory whose government was anxious to protect its exploitative labor industry from federal regulation. Abramoff himself once explained his strategy succinctly to Scanlon in an email: "I think the key thing to remember with all these clients is that they are annoying, but the annoying losers are the only ones that have this kind of money and part with it so quickly."

These small, naive, deep-pocketed clients provided the operating budget for Abramoff's extravagant lobbying apparatus. Most important, of course, were the millions that Abramoff's clients poured into lawmakers' political committees and other conservative organizations with the hope of securing favorable legislation in return. But Abramoff understood that fundraising only gets you so far. So his clients also bankrolled what might be called his extracurricular operations: the skyboxes, the restaurants, the golf junkets. He spent about $1 million a year on his skyboxes at Camden Yards, the MCI Center, and FedEx Field, where members of Congress held about six-dozen fundraisers from 1999 to 2003. Abramoff also dropped over $3 million to start a swanky D.C. restaurant called Signatures, which became a gathering place for conservative lawmakers. During the restaurant's first two years, it gave away at least $180,000 in free meals and drinks.

Another crucial cog in Abramoff's machine was "Team Abramoff," his cabal of ambitious, mostly young associates. Many of Abramoff's most profitable relationships with lawmakers were cemented by former staffers whom he had lured from the Hill to work for him, such as Volz, Ney's former chief of staff. As one ex-leadership aide told Stone, Abramoff "looked for staffers to up-and-coming members ... who were aggressive and highly social, who were impressed by important people." Abramoff acted as a kind of queen bee, dispatching his protégés to call in favors from their former bosses. It's no coincidence that the lawmakers reported to be the most likely targets of prosecutors—Ney, Doolittle, DeLay, and Burns—all had staffers (and in the case of DeLay and Burns, more than one) who went to work for Abramoff.

The final, and perhaps most underappreciated, aspect of Abramoff's strategy was his "knack for framing his lobbying efforts in language that echoed the conservative principles embraced by his allies," as Stone describes it. Throughout his career, Abramoff banked on his conservative bona fides as well as his clients' money, couching their causes in the rhetoric of the Republican Revolution. Conservatism proved a surprisingly plastic ideological cover for Abramoff's friends in Congress. If, at Abramoff's prodding, members of Congress sought a tax break for a casino-owning tribe, it wasn't because of the skyboxes, the free meals, or the hundreds of thousands in contributions, but because the effort aligned with conservatism's anti-tax principles. If they worked to prevent an Indian tribe from opening a casino that might compete with Abramoff's client's casino, it was because of conservative opposition to gambling; if they worked to help a tribe open a casino, it was because conservatives wanted tribes to be fiscally independent and off the government dole; if they fought off legislative attempts to improve the lot of exploited immigrant laborers in a U.S. territory, it simply accorded with the conservatives' traditional distaste for federal regulation. In fact, one conservative think-tank official complained to Stone that the weekly meetings for high-powered Republican strategists and lobbyists convened by GOP luminary Grover Norquist had turned into a "freak show," in which Indian casinos and the Northern Mariana Islands were suddenly treated as central to the conservative movement.

And in one way, this assertion wasn't as absurd as it first appears. As Stone details, Abramoff was an instrumental part of the apparatus that helped nurture and expand the Republican majority. After Republicans took control of the House in early 1995, Abramoff immediately made himself an integral

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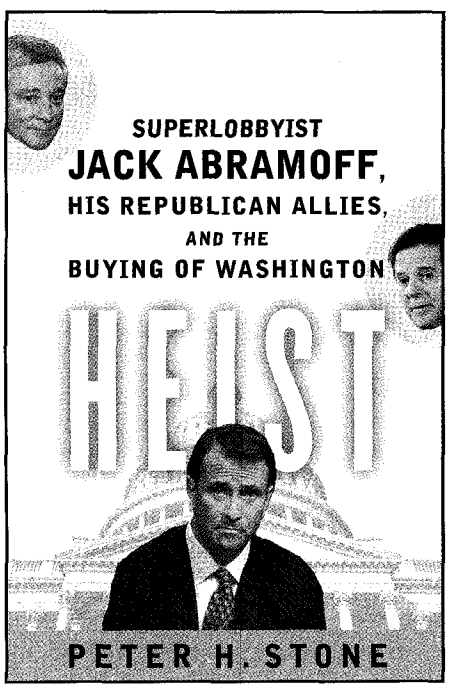
Abramoff for Dummies

A handy primer for those who don't know Jack.



Heist
By Peter Stone
$23, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

By Paul Kiel

Although Jack Abramoff, three of his lobbying associates, and one member of Congress are all going to prison, the story of the scandal is far from finished. In October, Karl Rove's assistant Susan Ralston resigned after a congressional report revealed that she'd apparently accepted thousands of dollars of unreported gifts from Abramoff (her former boss) while working in the White House. Republican National Committee chairman Ken Mehlman also came under additional scrutiny after emails released with the report indicated that he had performed several favors for Abramoff's lobbying team—including helping to push through a $16-million grant over Justice Department objections, and engineering the firing of a State Department official who espoused policies unfavorable to Abramoff's client. The investigation is likely to continue into 2007 and beyond—and will almost certainly produce more indictments and guilty pleas as the scores of investigators and prosecutors continue their meticulous work. For those bewildered by the details of intricate deals and obscure organizations that have multiplied as the investigation unfolds, *National Journal*'s Peter Stone has provided a comprehensive history of the Abramoff affair so far. *Heist*, his 200-page primer, draws together the mountain of documentary evidence already released, along with the dogged reporting of a handful of investigative journalists (Stone among them), to produce the clearest picture yet of how Abramoff's operation really worked.

The basic facts of Abramoff's tenure in Washington are simple enough. After an early political career that included a financially troubled stint atop the College Republicans and a foray into film production, Abramoff found his calling as a lobbyist in the heady aftermath of the GOP takeover of the House in 1994. His practice thrived at the law firm of Preston, Gates & Ellis, thanks to his ties with powerful House Republicans like former speaker Newt Gingrich and former majority whip—later majority leader—Tom DeLay. There he stayed, until his freewheeling ways and unorthodox clients unnerved the firm's senior partners. At the beginning of 2001, Abramoff moved his entire operation—clients, associates, and all—to another law firm, Greenberg Traurig, where he was allowed to operate under less scrutiny. Three years later, *The Washington Post* revealed in a front page exposé that Abramoff had bilked his Indian casino clients of millions of dollars a year, and his fall, along with a federal investigation, ensued. Finally, on Jan. 3, 2006, he pled guilty to a raft of charges, bribery-related conspiracy chief among them. In exchange for his help, prosecutors offered to recommend a reduced sentence (between nine and a half and 11 years, instead of as many as 20 years). It's apparent that he's been avidly cooperating with investigators ever since, along with three former associates (and

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Now an accomplished science writer, Stephen Hall was also once a small boy, and he, too, would like to disassemble the myth that says taller is better. For Hall, the story of the Potsdam Giants is not a historical curiosity, but a neat allegory of our modern wrong-headedness about size. We defer to the tall. We attribute "leadership qualities" to them. Short children are bullied more and experience more stress, anxiety, and depression than their classmates. We behave as though height were a representation of male virtue. In so doing, we enact the dictates of biological determinism without ever considering their merit. We are living in an "altocracy," Hall writes, ruled by "heightism," and he wields an impressive portfolio of data to bolster his claim.

Our height bias is no historical accident, but a once-valuable evolutionary adaptation.

In the last century, all but three U.S. presidential contests were won by the taller candidate. A survey of *Fortune* 500 CEOs shows that the average corporate titan is much taller than the national mean, roughly six feet to roughly five feet nine (nearly 60 percent of the executives top six feet, compared to 14.5 percent of the country at large). The median wage of the tallest quarter of the male population is 13 percent higher than that of the shortest 25 percent in Britain and the United States. Tall workers are not only paid better than short workers; the disparity is comparable to the wage inequalities associated with race and gender in America.

Our height bias is no historical accident, Hall writes, but a once-valuable evolutionary adaptation. Size has always been a dependable proxy for health and well-being, he points out, particularly in children and particularly across populations. An academic discipline, sometimes called "the new anthropometry," has been built on the principle that body mass is a reliable measure of the general welfare of any society. "You tell me the average mid-arm circumference of children growing up in a developing country, and I'll tell you the gross national product of the country they live in," boasts one growth specialist.

Today, Hall believes, a focus on height obscures the underlying issues, rather than clarifying them. We don't judge the wealth of a potential mate by his height, for instance, and we don't assume that disparities in the height of countries reflect the workings of an invisible hand driving the wealth of nations—they reflect constituent disparities in social equality, health care, and diet. We know enough about ourselves to know that height should not matter.

Not satisfied demonstrating, convincingly, how much we overvalue size, Hall takes the unfortunate step of trying to prove how much our culture undervalues shortness. Late into *Size Matters*, he commits himself to squaring what he acknowledges as the biological bias for growth with what he has come to see as the social and psychological benefits of growing up small—namely, a greater incentive to network socially, instruction in perseverance and guile, and a marginally lesser impact on the environment. Though these advantages are a tad contrived, coming from a committed advocate for the undersized, Hall's message is more than simple small-fry boosterism. Evolution leaves behind a long paper trail, and it probably has something nasty to say about all human aspirations—those nourished by the tall as well as the short, the outgoing as well as the introverted, the strong as well as the meek. Our evolutionary prejudices are vestigial, and should be discarded by our better nature, he suggests, because we've long outrun natural selection. His central gripe is that not enough of us have realized it.

The biggest sinners here, for Hall, are the parents of short boys. He reserves special contempt for those who perpetuate height bias through the cosmetic use of human growth hormone (hGH) on their children despite uncertain health risks. No studies have yet shown that hGH, which promotes only marginal improvement in growth, has any measurable psychological effect on child patients, more often boys than girls by a factor of three. Some observers suggest the most noticeable outcome is unmet expectation, and there is growing evidence that boosting growth hormone above normal levels can contribute to the appearance of cancer.

In the decades before the hormone could be engineered, hGH was harvested from the pituitary glands of human cadavers. One cadaver yielded only enough hormone for a single daily dose, so the treatment was exceedingly rare and extremely expensive. Committees were established to determine which patients were most deserving of the treatment, and competition was fierce. In 1985, a handful of children in the U.S. and Britain died after becoming infected with Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, the degenerative neurological disorder, from a contaminated batch of hGH. The doctors supervising hormone treatment immediately suspended the program, but many parents protested. "We'll take the risk," they told one growth expert. He responded, "'Yeah? For an inch, two inches?' And the parents said, 'Yeah.'"

David Wallace-Wells, who stands five foot eleven in his bare feet, is a writer in New York.

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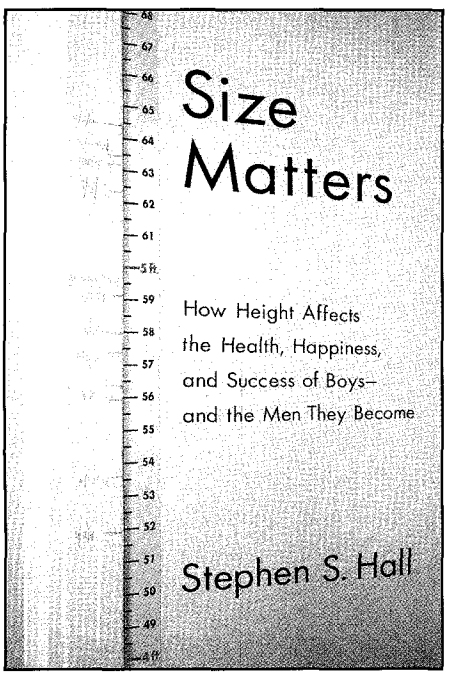
Little Big Man

Getting over our obsession with height.



Size Matters
By Stephen S. Hall
$26, Houghton Mifflin

By David Wallace-Wells

In 1712, a first child was born to the militarist prince Frederick William of Prussia. A year shy of the throne himself, Frederick had high hopes for his son, the future Frederick II. But the child was "small, sickly ... delicate, backward, and puny," writes the journalist Stephen S. Hall in *Size Matters*, his engaging new nonfiction picaresque. The pitiful size of the crown prince was an embarrassment to the new king, but it was also, Hall suggests, a private incitement.

Between his ascension in 1713 and his death in 1740, Frederick more than doubled the ranks of the Prussian army—from a considerable 38,000 men to an intimidating 83,000—but the figure that concerned him most was not the size of his army but the height of his soldiers. Modestly built himself, Frederick had fallen in love with tall men. "He collected them like stamps," writes Hall, establishing an elite regiment of outsized grenadiers that became known as the Potsdam Giants. No member of the unit stood less than six feet tall, and many were closer to seven; the drill leader is said to have topped seven feet. "The tallest men ever assembled until the birth of professional basketball," noted one medical historian. During royal parades, the Giants would escort the king by holding hands above his carriage.

Frederick's obsession was more than mere schoolyard eugenics. He dispatched representatives to find the tallest men in Europe and bring them home, at any cost. Sometimes, the giants were willing conscripts or persuadable mercenaries. (One such Swedish legionnaire, eight and a half feet tall, was an early coup.) Other warriors were bought as military chattel from their own rulers, "with transfer fees that modern football clubs could scarcely rival." Still others were simply kidnapped in foreign lands and forced into service like slaves. Though the practice exasperated monarchs and diplomats across Europe, many of Frederick's rivals played along, even farming their own ranks for impressive soldiers to offer to the Prussian court as gifts. To ensure the Potsdam Giants were not merely a brief sideshow in Prussian history but a kind of vanguard unit of military history, the king insisted his giant grenadiers marry only equally giant women. More than a century later, Charles Darwin wrote that, unlike livestock, humans had never been forcibly bred for select characteristics, "except in the well-known case of the Prussian grenadiers."

As for the diminutive prince, he succeeded his father after a tempestuous adolescence that included at least one conspiracy to treason. Now Frederick II, he modernized the royal bureaucracy, cultivated a storied friendship with Voltaire, and led personally a series of military campaigns so successful he was considered by Napoleon to be the greatest battlefield tactician of all time. When he grew up, he became Frederick the Great. One of his first acts as king was disbanding the Potsdam Giants.

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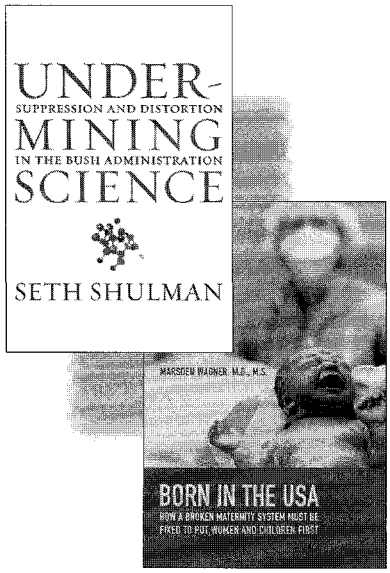
Exposés



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It is in Israel, first with his account of his transformation into a soldier with the Israeli Defense Forces, then at Ketziot, that Goldberg's narrative reaches the height of its power. Those familiar with his work for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine* will recognize the skills that have made him one of America's finest foreign correspondents: an eye for detail, a flair for story-telling, an unflinching self regard, and a measured tone that lends his work an air of authenticity and authority. In a series of breathtaking vignettes, he paints a portrait of life as a *shoter*—squeezed between Israeli Arab-haters on one side, and anti-Semitic ideologues on the other. In this violent and brutalizing environment, Goldberg struggles to retain his humanity without being taken for a patsy. It is a balancing act that he ultimately finds impossible to pull off. His acts of kindness are met with contempt from both sides. Even the precarious bond he forms with Hijazi is informed by the understanding that the Palestinian would, in the right circumstances, kill him without hesitation—although, Hijazi assures him, "it wouldn't be personal."

Goldberg's account of the post-Ketziot years are equally evocative—and, at times, terrifying. Thrust into the Middle East maelstrom as a journalist, he witnesses the birth of the Oslo peace process under Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, then watches momentum toward a lasting peace crumble in the wake of rejectionist bus bombers and revanchist Jewish settlers. In Goldberg's telling, the Middle East is perennially in the grip of two dueling narratives, one Arab and one Jewish, and while he never leaves any doubt where his own sympathies lie, he is a compassionate and measured enough journalist to recognize the excesses on both sides.

Goldberg has little use for Israeli bullies like Ariel Sharon, whose visit to the Temple Mount he blames in part for sparking the second intifada. But he also offers frighteningly intimate portraits of killers such as Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz Rantisi (an inmate at Ketziot when Goldberg was a prison guard there), whom Goldberg enrages by suggesting that he, Rantisi, might be part Jewish. (Rantisi was killed by an Israeli helicopter missile strike in 2004.) Goldberg's chutzpah reaches its apex in an encounter with Samuel Haq, an Osama Bin Laden admirer who runs a *madrassah* for Taliban-in-training near Peshawar, Pakistan. After listening to the *madrassah* founder ascribe to the Jews all responsibility for the world's woes, he tells Haq matter-of-factly, "I'm Jewish." Not many Jewish Middle East correspondents would make such a revelation, but Goldberg's honesty pays off. He gets a welcome to the *madrassah* and spends a month there as a provocative presence, gathering insights into Islamic extremism and anti-Jewish mythologizing that he might not have gotten had he entered undercover.

Goldberg's narrative comes full circle with his reunion with Rafiq Hijazi a decade after their friendship was formed. With the al Aqsa *intifada* raging in the West Bank and Gaza, and the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington further poisoning the atmosphere, the pair struggle to recover the common ground—a worldly curiosity, an empathy for the other side—that had joined them in the prison camp. By now, however, the once-secular Hijazi has been tempted by what Goldberg calls the "lunatic eschatology" of Islamic fundamentalism; despite having studied at George Washington University and prospered in the United States, he announces to Goldberg his conviction that "America needed to be taught a lesson." Goldberg and Hijazi come away from their last encounter in *Prisoners* with a grudging recognition of each other's humanity. But their tentative reconciliation seems only to underscore the vastness of the Middle East abyss.

Joshua Hammer is an award-winning author and foreign correspondent. His most recent book is *Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire that Helped Forge the Path to World War II*, published in September by Free Press.

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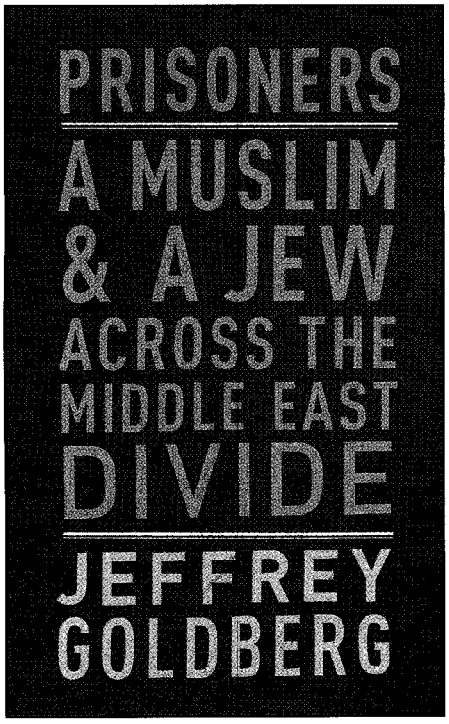
Stuck in the Middle East With You

Lessons from an improbable friendship.



Prisoners
By Jeffrey Goldberg
$25, Knopf

By Joshua Hammer

In 1990, near the end of the first Palestinian *intifada*, Jeffrey Goldberg, a young American Jew living in Israel and contemplating immigrating there, was dispatched on army reserve duty to serve as a guard in Ketziot, a bleak prison camp in the Negev Desert. For Goldberg, who had grown up admiring the early Zionist pioneers and the warriors of the Jewish state, being a *shoter* (policeman) provided a lesson in the moral ambiguities of Israel-as-occupier. In one memorable episode, he finds himself facing a seething pack of Palestinian inmates on the verge of a riot after guards shot a prisoner who had attacked them. His face covered by a gas mask, carrying a truncheon, Goldberg contemplates the ironies of his transformation. "All my life I wanted to be a Freedom Rider," he writes. "Now I felt like Bull Connor."

Goldberg's prison experience and the friendship he managed to forge across the barbed wire with one of the inmates, a Fatah activist and mathematics whiz from Gaza named Rafiq Hijazi, form the foundation of his brilliant new book, *Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide*. The book is, on one level, an intensely personal coming-of-age story, tracing Goldberg's progress from secular Jewish student in New York to Israeli soldier to war correspondent. But it is also perhaps the best on-the-ground portrait since Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem* of the hatreds, passions, and illusions gripping the contemporary Middle East. Goldberg's journey through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Gaza, and Israel during the period immediately before and after 9/11 provides disturbing insights into the abyss separating Arab and Jew, East and West—if not a clash of civilizations, Goldberg suggests, than a perhaps unbridgeable gulf of empathy and understanding.

Goldberg grew up in an affluent suburb on the south shore of Long Island; his parents were Jewish liberals whose religious exposure began and ended with occasional visits to the local Reform temple, "a sterile place of yellow hallways, organ music, women in furs, and *garmentos* talking through Shabbat services." He found his way to Zionism at an early age; while his high school and college classmates were rallying around cult figures like Leonard Peltier, the Native-American activist serving a life sentence for murder, Goldberg focused his idolization on Yonatan Netanyahu, the Israeli special-forces commander and older brother of the former prime minister, who died leading the raid to free hostages at Entebbe Airport in Uganda in 1976. His burgeoning Jewish identity led him first to a Socialist Zionist summer camp, then on a dangerous mission to aid refuseniks in the Brezhnev-era Soviet Union—where he was arrested and threatened by the KGB—and finally, in his early twenties, to Tel Aviv.

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folks," as he calls regular people, I'm your guy.

But if you want to join the fight and need to determine just what kind of person to hate, *Culture Warrior* can be maddeningly vague. First, many of O'Reilly's causes barely exist outside the fevered minds of FOX News hosts; if you'd like to enlist in the resistance to the War on Christmas, there isn't much to do unless you want to throw rocks through store windows with "Happy Holidays" signs. (For the unfamiliar, the phrase "Happy Holidays" is, according to O'Reilly, deeply offensive to Christians and represents an assault on our heritage.) Furthermore, O'Reilly's caricature of his opponents' beliefs is so ridiculous and hyperbolic that it puts him in an awkward position. If there is no one of any importance who actually advocates capping Americans' net worth at $15 million or banning religious expression in the public square (both of which he claims to be part of the secular-progressive agenda), it would seem to be difficult to tar any particular individual with that brush.

So, though O'Reilly's list of offenders is long, for many, he never specifies just what makes them part of the "S-P crowd," other than crossing swords with Bill O'Reilly. Nancy Pelosi criticized O'Reilly for his on-air comment inviting al Qaeda to attack San Francisco, so she has "S-P fever." About Alec Baldwin, he says, "the actor is primarily interested in politics, but there is always that progressive crossover: because he is a liberal Democrat, the S-P forces support his philosophy." George Clooney is "more of a far-left ideologue than an enlisted S-P culture warrior." What this all means is left unsaid. Even someone like columnist Jimmy Breslin is part of the conspiracy. (When Breslin criticized his last book, *The O'Reilly Factor for Kids*, O'Reilly says, he wrote Breslin a note that read, "you have tried to hurt a project that could help many children. Hope you feel good about that." The succor the nation's youth derived from *The O'Reilly Factor for Kids* is hard to measure, but it seems unlikely that Breslin's criticism set back the little ones too much.)

The truth is that "Bill O'Reilly" is a character that Bill O'Reilly plays on TV, an archetype of Average Joe outrage and two-fisted pugnaciousness.

O'Reilly alternately portrays himself as hero and martyr, the nation's savior and a lonely, principled voice with the weight of the world on his sturdy but tired shoulders. "There is no shortage of people trying to marginalize me, or worse, destroy me," he tells us. "My family has also been threatened and I've had to change every aspect of my life. No longer can I behave as a 'regular guy' and go out and cut loose with my friends. No longer can I even engage a stranger in conversation—there are too many crazies out there. At work, every call I receive is monitored and every interaction I have has to be witnessed. I am never off the job and am always on guard. Would you want to live that way?"

Lashing himself to the rack with the enthusiasm of Mel Gibson, O'Reilly predicts the firestorm that his book will bring about. "The S-P power brokers will be seething, and I guarantee they will command their forces to attack me in every way possible. As in the past, personal smears will rule the day and I will be defamed from all secular directions." Because of his fight, he writes, "I've paid the price, and so have those around me, because the amount of hatred directed my way is staggering."

Yet if he is overcome by these sinister forces, we will know all the good he did. "Think about what America would be like now if we [FOX News and "The O'Reilly Factor"] had not arrived on the scene and provided Americans with an alternative to the strongly S-P established media," he writes near the book's end.

But ultimately, this man of courage isn't too eager to engage his opponents. He says many times that actually arguing with them is pointless, because it's "virtually impossible to have a reasonable conversation with an S-P fanatic." And he admits he won't allow "the S-Ps" on his show, because "it is hard to imagine a more loathsome group."

The blurb on *Culture Warrior*'s cover, from gossip columnist Liz Smith, is a creepy testament to how O'Reilly would like to be seen. "[Bill O'Reilly's] aura of command is fascinating," she says. "I left Mr. O'Reilly's super-hot domain trying to think of whom he reminded me. It came to me: Gen. George S. Patton, complete with ivory-handled revolvers on his hips, couldn't exude more confidence, certainty, and know-how than Bill O'Reilly." With Bill O'Reilly, it's all about the exuding.

O'Reilly is nothing if not a self-promoter, and as he did with his previous books, he has been hawking *Culture Warrior* relentlessly on his television and radio shows. No doubt many of his loyal fans will follow instructions and get their hands on a copy, and it will become, in the term its book jacket uses to describe O'Reilly's previous books, a "mega-bestseller." As FOX News recently conceeded, the median age of O'Reilly's viewers is 71. Imagine three million grumpy old men shaking their fists at the television screen, a copy of *Culture Warrior* in hand, shouting, "You said it, Bill! Give 'em hell!"

Paul Waldman is a Senior Fellow at Media Matters for America and the author of *Being Right Is Not Enough: What Progressives Must Learn From Conservative Success.*

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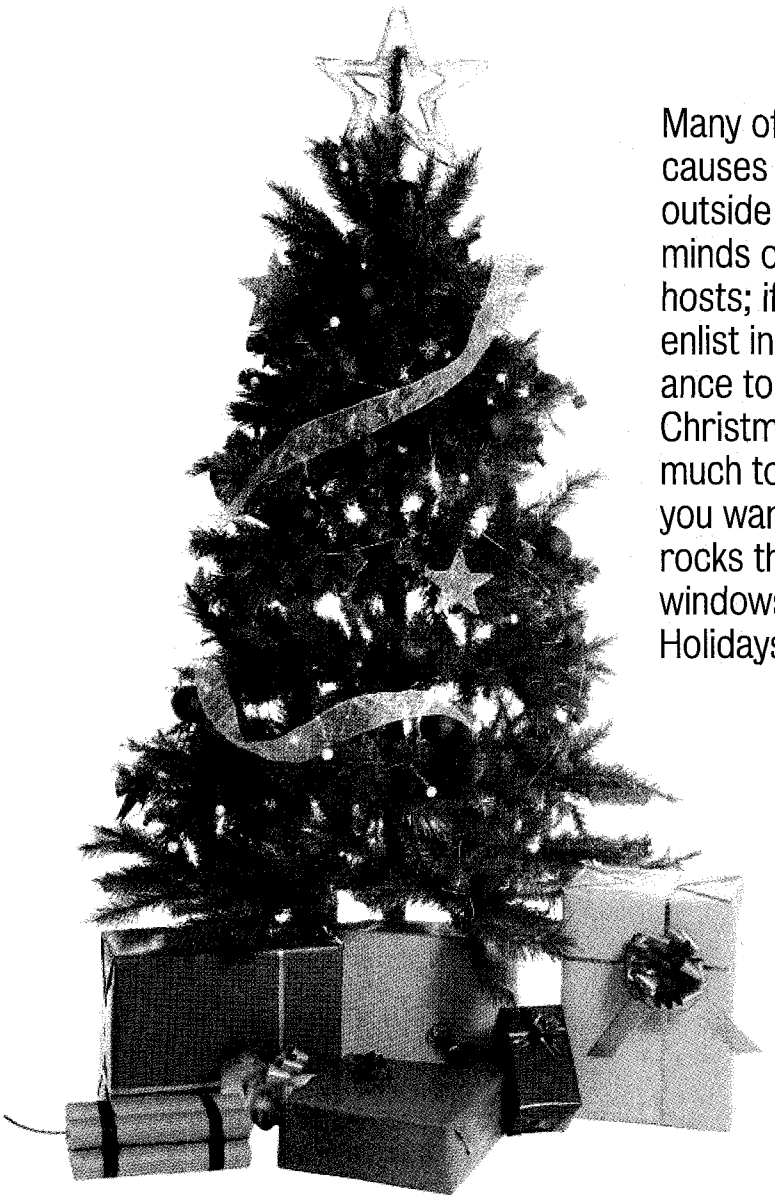
easy, referring to MMFA only as "vile"). I've also been on O'Reilly's show a number of times (though not since I joined Media Matters—the man who calls people who won't appear on his show "cowards" refuses to allow anyone from MMFA on).

But being on the receiving end of O'Reilly's sneers and insults isn't the trial it might seem. In fact, there are really only two conclusions one can make about Bill O'Reilly. Either he's a paranoid, self-deluded bully, brimming with resentment, insecure about his manhood, and consumed by hatred. Or it's all an act.

The truth is that "Bill O'Reilly" is a character that Bill O'Reilly plays on TV, an archetype of Average Joe outrage and two-fisted pugnaciousness. There's a reason Stephen Colbert modeled his own character—"a well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot"—on the man he calls "Papa Bear." But where Colbert goes for laughs, O'Reilly tries to convince his viewers that he feels their pain.

You can see it in the lengths *Culture Warrior* goes to match O'Reilly's conversational tone, a blue-collar vernacular meant to signal that the author is just a regular guy. On the air, O'Reilly is alone among television broadcasters in talking this way, and it is to his credit that he understands how powerful it can be in maintaining the persona he worked so hard to construct. But in print, the effect is so transparently affected it becomes almost laughable. "Oh, and one more thing," O'Reilly will write. "Too harsh? No way." "Am I wrong here?" "I mean, come on." "So there."

Bill O'Reilly desperately wants you to believe he's just like you. To get a sense of how important his blue-collar cred is, consider the unsettled issue of exactly where O'Reilly grew up. In December 2000, a *Washington Post* story quoted O'Reilly's mother saying that though Bill says he grew up in Levittown, N.Y.; in fact, the family lived in Westbury, a somewhat more affluent town a few miles away. The same *Post* article noted that although O'Reilly trumpets the fact that his father never made more than $35,000, he retired in 1978. That works out to just over $100,000 in today's dollars—not enough to make the O'Reillys stinking rich, but not paltry enough to send them to the poorhouse, either.



Many of O'Reilly's causes barely exist outside the fevered minds of Fox News hosts; if you'd like to enlist in the resistance to the War on Christmas, there isn't much to do unless you want to throw rocks through store windows with "Happy Holidays" signs.

The point is that this issue—because it bears so directly on O'Reilly's persona as someone who pulled himself up from nothing by his own bootstraps—is one he feels very strongly about. In *Culture Warrior*, he goes so far as to reproduce the deed to his parents' house, with the words "Levittown, NY" printed in the corner. In case you haven't gotten the point, O'Reilly writes, "You are reading the words of the poster boy for U-M [upward mobility], by the way." (The habit of turning ordinary phrases into their initials runs throughout the book. Fewer than 20 pages from the end, he stops saying "traditional culture warrior" and starts saying "T-Warrior." When she interviewed him on "20/20," Barbara Walters said, "You call yourself 'T-Warrior.' I'm gonna call you T from now on. Okay, T?" She then began her next question with, "So listen, T..." There is little indication that she was making fun of him.)

All of this is a way of forging connections between O'Reilly and his audience. His message is, I'm one of you. When you get ticked off, I get ticked off. When it seems like there are powerful forces out there that are keeping you down, I feel it, too, and I'll fight them on your behalf. If you're one of "the

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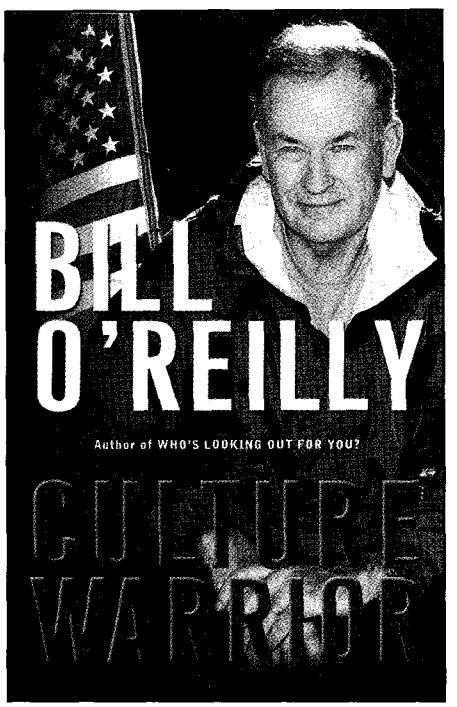
Boor War

The latest stage of Bill O'Reilly's self-parody.



Culture Warrior
By Bill O'Reilly
$26, Broadway

By Paul Waldman

For a certain kind of conservative, the life lived in anything other than a state of war is hardly worth living. War clarifies things. War divides the world neatly between us and our enemies. War offers a kind of moral cleansing that makes one's own transgressions meaningless in the face of the other side's abominations against all that is right and good. War strips the world of messy, uncomfortable ambiguity.

And nowhere is ambiguity less welcome than in the world of conservative broadcasting, where Bill O'Reilly is king. So while pundit after conservative pundit proclaims that we are in the midst of World War III, battling for the survival of civilization itself, this season brings the arrival of *Culture Warrior*, O'Reilly's latest transposition of his television show (and radio show, and syndicated column) to the pages of a book.

The more important war, O'Reilly tells us, is being fought here at home. "On one side of the battlefield," he writes, "are the armies of the traditionalists like me, people who believe the United States was well founded and has done enormous good for the world. On the other side are the committed forces of the secular-progressive movement (also known as the S-P crew) that want to change America dramatically." His goal "is to expose and defeat people who have the power to do you great harm. My weapons will be facts and superior analysis based on those facts."

Because let's face it, the War on Terror just doesn't cut it. After all, with an all-volunteer army and a president who encourages us to keep shopping in the face of fear, there isn't much the average citizen can do to join the fight against Islamofascism. If you really want to do some righteous smiting, the best place to aim is at your neighbors.

And smite O'Reilly does, lashing out not just at plump targets like George Soros, the ACLU, or the standard collection of Hollywood liberal boogeymen, but at almost anyone who has ever criticized him. Indeed, the book is a tribute to bile; it would have more properly been titled, "God Damn I Hate Liberals." He refers to those he doesn't like as "radical-left gutter-snipes," "far-left fanatics," or "vermin."

Nonetheless—in what is just one among many cases of what psychologists call projection—O'Reilly writes, "I mean, what I don't get about Susan Sarandon and her fellow S-P travelers is the constant anger." Yet anger is the fuel that drives virtually every episode of "The O'Reilly Factor." Without anger, Bill O'Reilly would be nothing; he certainly wouldn't have so many different media megaphones. Anger is his *oeuvre*, his milieu, his *mise en scene*. A few sentences later, O'Reilly acknowledges that he gets angry because "I have to deal with a massive amount of social injustice and chicanery on a daily basis," but doesn't bother to explain why it's OK for him to be angry, but not for "the S-P crew."

Time for the full disclosure: I work at Media Matters for America, whose staff O'Reilly has called "the most vile, despicable human beings in the country" (although in *Culture Warrior* he goes

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ther empowered to monitor and cajole the parties? Would Palestinians, led by Hamas or Fatah or a combination of the two, be better tested by setting security rather than declarative targets? Is there a need to publicly issue clear parameters for an endgame peace arrangement, to which the various parties would be expected to respond? The commission would address all these questions.

A full U.S. re-engagement would likely need to include, in parallel, the political issues of land, borders, demilitarization and settlements, along with immediate on-the-ground needs (especially regarding the Palestinians) of humanitarian assistance, economic rehabilitation and a mutually respected ceasefire. The allied Arab states could be asked to play an active supporting role—including early gestures of public diplomacy towards Israel, providing the Israeli government with both vital assurances and an important marketing tool. An envoy to lead the bold initiative would almost certainly be needed, and former World Bank chair James Wolfensohn (who briefly played this role during disengagement) might be recalled with a new mandate.

Democrats are already looking ahead to 2009, when they may return to the White House. If they do, they're going to need a Middle East policy that is sounder than President Bush's, and can garner enough political support to succeed. That won't be easy. But handing the Middle East brief to a bipartisan commission is perhaps the least-risky way to begin that effort.

Moreover, the region cannot wait until 2009. Israel's wounded Olmert government needs help to navigate its way back to a peace process, without which it has little reason to be in office. And, especially after Hizbollah's success this summer, the allied Arab states need to prove to their people that a moderate, U.S.-friendly approach can deliver results on the Palestinian issue. Syria needs a practical alternative to its alliance with Iran, and its unhelpful meddling in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq. And the Palestinians themselves desperately need a clear signal that non-violent negotiations can secure something more than a endless armed struggle, a reverse is the lesson of recent years. We all need to understand that political Islamists are not cut from the same cloth. By lumping them together, we pursue policies that strengthen the Al-Qaedists and other anti-democratic forces. Of course, there is no guarantee that President Bush would follow such a study group's advice. But Congress would have done its duty and tried; and Americans, the region and the world would take note. And today, that too is something.

Daniel Levy is a senior Fellow at the New America Foundation and The Century Foundation and directs their respective Middle East and Peace initiatives. Levy formerly worked as an adviser in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and as an official Israeli negotiator at Oslo under Rabin and at Taba under Barak. He was the lead Israeli drafter of the unofficial Geneva Initiative detailed peace plan.

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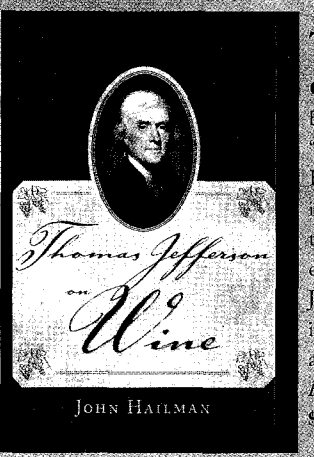

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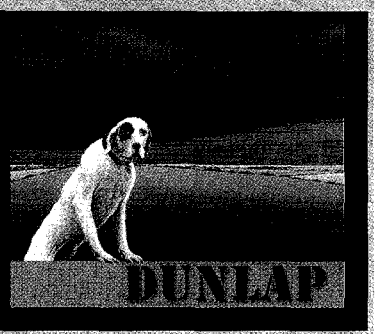

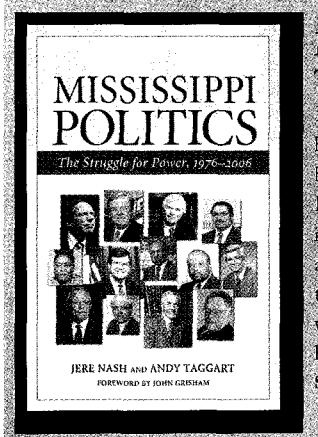

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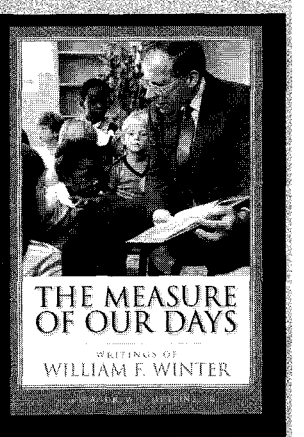

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ly appears uninterested.

For Democratic legislators to make this argument, and to encourage a policy re-think via a Baker-Hamilton study group, the politics will also have to add up. That calculation isn't so simple. In recent years, the GOP has made a bold play to peel off Jewish supporters and donors, by citing President Bush's strong support for Israel. Democrats may worry that establishing a commission to assess those policies might advance this GOP effort.

No doubt it will, on the margins. But anecdotal and polling evidence suggest that the silent majority of the Jewish community is hungry for a progressive move to renew peace efforts and hope: Democrats would likely be surprised at just how favorably much of their Jewish base would respond to a new direction. This path also offers the chance to prevent a looming rift between the Democratic Jewish base, and the progressive foreign policy community. A pro-peace process Democratic voice that is at the same time firmly pro-Israel (remember President Clinton?) could help prevent a schism between these two key constituencies. So far, however, Democrats have allowed Republicans to "out-pro-Israel" them, by failing to challenge a neocon orthodoxy that ultimately damages Israel and the U.S. A large part of the pro-Israel community appears ready for this message.

Some may object to James Baker co-chairing the effort—his tough stand towards Israel's settlement policy didn't earn him many fans. But he is the Republican inheritance of the bi-partisan study group, has credibility in the region, and did, after all, bring the then-Likud-Shamir Israeli government to the Madrid Peace Conference.

So, a re-mandated Baker-Hamilton Study group on the Middle East peace process could offer the administration a face-saving way to change course. Just as the Iraq Study Group was given the mandate to talk to anyone and everyone it chose, so, too, should the Baker-Hamilton commission have the freedom to gather information from all experts and interested parties—including those that the White House currently deems to be beyond the conversational pale.

Once the commission has gathered all the facts, it would provide new policy options to the administration, just as it will do on Iraq. While it's impossible to say what such a commission would recommend, we know enough to hazard a pretty good guess. As secretary of state, Baker believed in shuttle diplomacy, and recently said the administration should talk to Syria. Lee Hamilton signed a recent call by the International Crisis Group for urgent action towards a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We can expect, then, that the commission will engage in a fundamental reassessment of the administration's existing policy. Is the Middle East Roadmap still salvageable, or is a new framework necessary? Should the Quartet mechanism (the U.S., EU, the UN Secretary-General's representative, and Russia) be fur-

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on the Israel-Palestine issue could be decisive in stabilizing the Middle East.

A re-energized political effort on the Israeli-Palestinian and broader Arab-Israeli front would also dramatically wrong-foot America's adversaries in the region. Such a move would answer the calls of America's moderate Arab allies, and represent a first step towards repairing our damaged regional credibility. Indeed, it's hard to see how the alliances necessary to attempt progress on Iraq and Iran can even be constructed without such re-engagement and investment of political capital.

Unfortunately, however, the administration has wandered so far off course that nothing short of a policy re-boot will work. On one Mideast journey during the Lebanon crisis this summer, Secretary Rice was forced to return to Washington in embarrassing dejection—she was unwelcome in any regional capital outside Jerusalem. Her return visit last month was derided in the Israeli and Arab press alike as promising little, and achieving even less. Envoys have been dispatched sporadically (General Anthony Zinni, Ambassador John Wolf) but to little effect. Attempts to advance economic development have failed because they haven't been matched with a political framework. The core issues of the conflict—land, borders, Jerusalem, security co-operation—were abandoned as too difficult, and have now been exacerbated on the ground. The administration's repeated failure to take any initiative—when Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas replaced Yassir Arafat, when the Saudis introduced their peace plan, when Ehud Olmert was elected on a platform of territorial withdrawal, when the Syrians called for a return to peace talks—ill-served both American and Israeli interests. Hence, the need for a commission.

The implications of such a commission for Israel will weigh heavily on Democrats, for legitimate reasons of substance and of domestic politics. It is these considerations that create the temptation to move rightwards of the administration on this issue. However, succumbing to that temptation could be both bad policy and bad politics.

Recently, there has been a tendency to conflate the neoconservative agenda with the Israeli interest. This is both wrongheaded and disastrous for Israel's predicament. There is a narrative that links America and Israel's common interests that is not of neo-conservative design. The Democratic Congress needs to discover that narrative.

During the election campaign, some Democrats with Jewish constituencies did make the connection, by noting that the Iraq war strengthens jihadists and emboldens Iran. Now, there's a second sentence that needs to be articulated: American disengagement from the peace process and from its active mediating role has also been bad for Israel.

To guarantee its future as a secure Jewish and democratic state, Israel needs agreed and recognized borders. The vast majority of Israelis understand this, and the precedent was set in evacuating Gaza. Israel is now groping for a formula to part ways with the West Bank (minus the agreed mutual modifications to 1967 line), and Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem. But rather than help smooth this difficult transition, the U.S. mere-

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Send the Baker Commission to Gaza

By Daniel Levy

Democrats made huge gains this election, largely because voters rejected the administration's policy in Iraq. But even before the electorate took its frustration over the war out on the president's party, Congress recognized the need for a new direction. In March, House Republicans—led by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) and supported by such senior GOP figures as Sen. John Warner (R-Va.)—asked James Baker and Lee Hamilton to form the Iraq Study Group. The group, which is expected to offer policy recommendations within the next few weeks, was widely understood to offer the White House an opportunity to chart a new course in Iraq without having to admit its previous policies were wrong.

So far, so good. But the much-neglected Israeli-Arab conflict—in particular the Israel- Palestine conflict—is as central to Middle East stability as the Iraq war is. The United States can't truly address the latter without taking on the former too. A regional policy make-over that fails to make these connections is unlikely to create the tipping point that will move the Middle East from extremism towards moderation.

Given the President's lackluster performance on this front over the last six years, some external impetus is clearly needed. The new Democratic congressional leadership has a responsibility to provide that impetus. They also have a handy tool with which to do so—if only they will use it.

Congress doesn't have the power to legislate a change of opinion or behavior on the part of the President and his foreign policy team. Simply urging the President to change his strategy won't work; in fact, it may just encourage him to dig in deeper. So legislators should try another tactic, one that stands a far better chance of forcing the White House to get it right: Give the job to Baker and Hamilton. The new Congress should mandate the Study Group to expand its scope of inquiry and provide recommendations for reviving the Middle East peace process—the logical next step in the painful rehabilitation of our policy for the region.

Of course, both policy and politics have to be considered here. And politically, this proposal sounds counter-intuitive: if anything, the new Democratic Congress will be tempted to run to the President's right on the Israeli-Arab conflict, as Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking member on the House International Relations Committee, did this summer when he pledged to block the aid the president had promised Lebanon until Beirut agreed to allow international troops to patrol the Syrian border.

Even when Democrats belatedly discovered their voice on Iraq this election, most conspicuously failed to connect the war to a broader problem: our misguided regional policy that is urgently in need of reform. Democrats will need to be convinced that expanding the Baker-Hamilton Commission mandate to include Israel-Palestine would not only serve America's national-security interests and benefit our ally, Israel, but also that such a move wouldn't be a political exercise in self-flagellation.

But let's start by considering the American interest. It seems blindingly obvious to observe that the unresolved, permanently visible Israeli-Palestinian conflict fans the flames of jihadism across the region. Yet this connection is rarely taken seriously, either as a matter of policy or in the public debate. The reluctance to do so is fed by the notion that "they hate us for what we are." This mistaken assumption creates a monolithic "them" that doesn't really exist (the fights *within* political Islam are often the fiercest). It also denies very real grievances that provoke anger and create fertile recruitment ground for radicals.

For Sunni Al-Qaedists and Shiite Ahmedinajists alike, the Palestinian cause is a central rallying cry. Although extremists exploit the issue, it resonates far beyond the *madrassa* or the militia training camp. Of course, solving this conflict is not a panacea; not all hatred would instantly evaporate. But progress

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It has been apparent for months that the administration's Plan A for Iraq is not working. As early as Labor Day, it was an open secret in Washington that the White House was in a holding pattern, waiting until after the elections to come up with Plan B. The surprise is that this time, the administration couldn't keep a secret. Well before the elections, the press began focusing on James Baker's Iraq Study Group, which is conveniently scheduled to report its recommendations after the polls close, as the vehicle for Bush to change direction. Just as Lyndon Johnson dispatched Robert McNamara and brought in Washington wizard Clark Clifford when Plan A failed in Vietnam, so too, it was speculated, Bush might bid farewell to the architect of his Plan A, Donald Rumsfeld, and bring in the Houdini of contemporary statecraft, Baker, to run Plan B.

But there have always been two overriding problems for Bush in moving to a new plan (aside from having to eat so much crow). First, is there anything that the United States can do to turn this situation around, or is Iraq now hopeless? We won't know the answer for months to come. For now, we will have to wrestle with what might conceivably work. An infusion of new troops? Some experts say we ought to put in up to 100,000 more Americans for a short, defined period, quiet the place down, and then internationalize the nation-building; others say the Army simply doesn't have 100,000 new troops to spare, and has maybe 10,000 to 20,000 at most. What about embracing a loose federation? Some experts say Iraq is moving in that direction anyway; others say a federation will produce an even bigger bloodbath in cities with mixed Sunni and Shia neighborhoods. On and on the arguments go. It won't be easy for the Baker group or anyone else to settle on the substance, but somehow they must.

The second big problem for Plan B has always been the political one: How the devil does this White House persuade a disillusioned and angry public to give it one more chance in Iraq? Why would anybody possibly trust these folks to get it right the second time, after they got it so wrong before? That's where the potential Democratic victories in this election come in.

President Bush would now have an opportunity to say to the public: "My fellow Americans, I have always believed in the wisdom of the people. You were the ones who first gave me a chance to become your president and by your overwhelming vote, you returned me to this office. Now, in your wisdom, you have spoken again—this time to send a clear message that you want a change of course in Iraq. You have sent many new Democrats here to Washington to carry that message for you.

"I have heard you loud and clear and I respect what you say. Therefore, I am embarking tonight on a serious re-evaluation of our policies in Iraq and I am asking Democrats in Congress to join me in shaping that policy. Over the next month, I will ask the Democratic leadership in Congress, along with the Republican leadership, to sit down with me and my team at least once a week to hammer out a new, bipartisan approach that the country can rally behind. I am asking Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton, the Republican and Democratic co-chairs of the Iraq Study Group, to offer their recommendations, with an outside perspective, so that we can hear all voices and work together on a new, effective Iraq strategy.

"It is clear now that we cannot just stay on the same course, and I believe it would be equally fatal to leave immediately. So, I would ask that both of those options be off the table. Let us instead, together, come up with a new plan that has a chance of success; let us also put in place a new team to carry out that plan—a team that will enjoy the respect and confidence of people on both sides of the aisle."

Could Bush pull that off politically? It's a long shot in an atmosphere so poisoned, but it's also the best shot he has. Remember that even though Americans have become increasingly opposed to the war, a steady plurality has held that we ought to stay long enough to finish the job. Even though voters seem inclined to pull the lever for Democrats, they may not be quite ready to pull the plug in Baghdad. Talking with various groups across the country this fall, my sense is that most people think the outcome in Iraq is very important, and they would be willing to give the administration one more chance to get it right—so long as the plan is well-conceived and isn't shoved down our throats.

That's why Democratic co-authorship of Plan B would be invaluable for the president. There's a sound precedent: One year after Democrats lost control of Congress in 1946 in a Republican tidal wave, a beleaguered Harry Truman desperately wanted to provide economic assistance to war-torn Europe. To win support in Congress and in the country, Truman ensured that his economic blueprint wasn't named after him—that honor went to George Marshall—and invited key Republicans like Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, to help write the policy. Vandenberg was not only one of the Marshall Plan's major architects, but his backing helped give it the political support it needed for passage. President Bush, please take note.

But why would Democrats want to play along with Bush, and be left with the tar of Iraq on their hands? Because sometimes the country faces challenges so important that the best politics in the long run is to be constructive patriots in the short run—to ignore the siren song of partisanship, and look after the nation's needs. If Bush were to be man enough to ask the Democrats to join him and they rejected him, they might score quick points with their base. Over time, however, they would rightly be seen as narrow-minded, entrenched partisans who no more deserve the mantle of the nation's trust than those they seek to displace. It is an old truism, still true, that the best policy makes the best politics. Maybe, then, Democratic victories could provide the best hope for finding a good way out of Iraq.

David Gergen is a former White House advisor to four presidents. He currently serves as a professor of public service at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and is editor at large for *U.S. News & World Report*.

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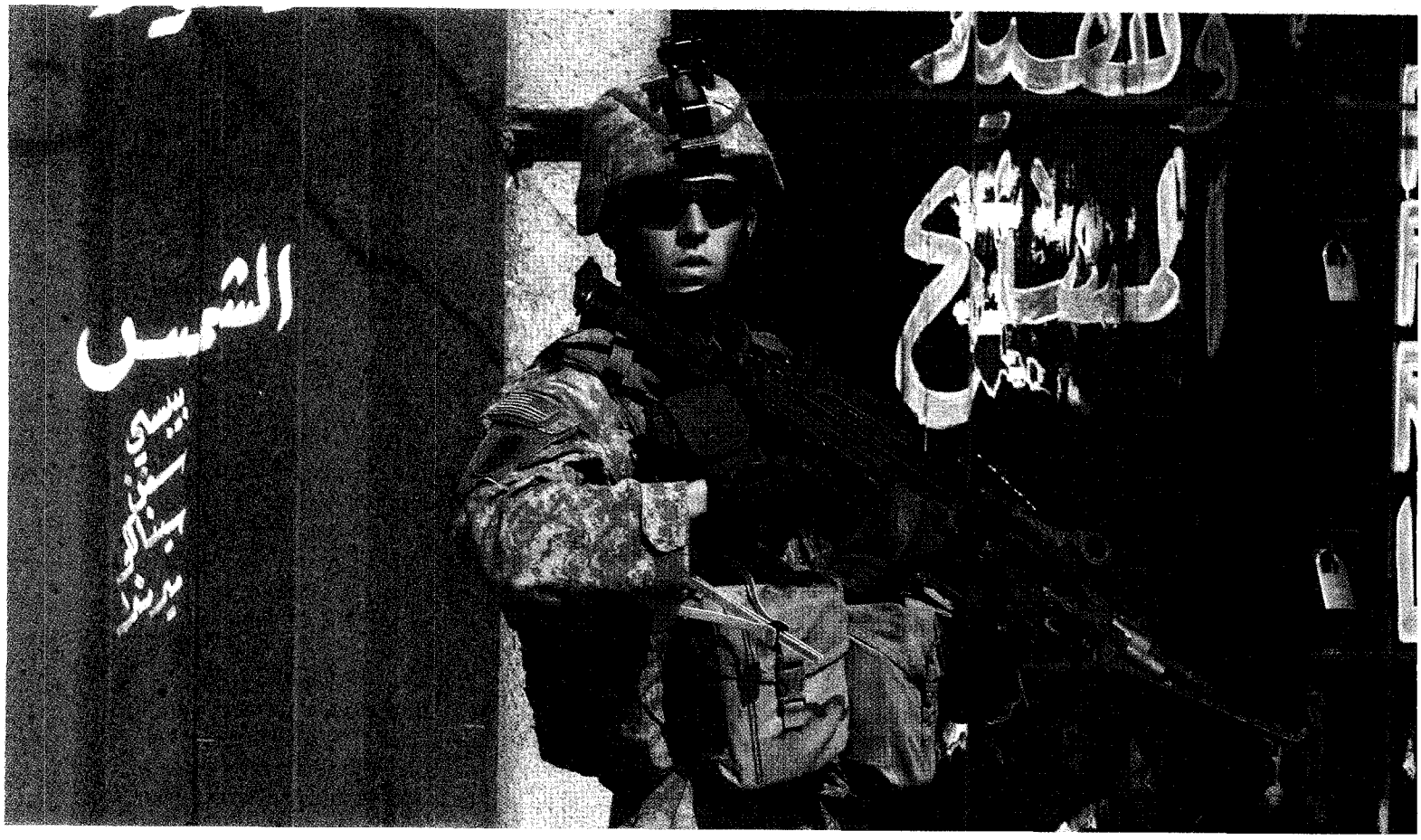

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Listen to the voters on Iraq

By David Gergen

Some 40 years ago, Republican conservatives began a long march out of the wilderness, building up a powerful political movement. Now, that march has ground to a halt in the sands of Iraq. Who would have imagined only three years ago that the toppling of Saddam's statue in Baghdad would lead to the toppling of the Republican colossus on Capitol Hill?

Yet even as they survey the damage, George W. Bush and Karl Rove must see that, ironically, large Democratic gains in Congress could actually give the administration a handle on finding a way out of the mess in Iraq. After all its other bungles, it is not clear whether the White House will be shrewd enough to grasp it, but the handle is clearly there. There is even opportunity here for Democrats, too—that is, if they are more interested in building their long-term future than in squandering their short-term victories.

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You'll be getting plenty of advice about what to do with your newfound power (limited, of course, by whatsisname in the White House) and how to set the table for 2008. So here's my advice, free (and probably worth it).

First, share the credit and forget about blame. Inevitably, some in the party will interpret the victory as a vindication or repudiation of one theory or another about how to win elections. Every election is an important data point, but a midterm election six years through one of the most incompetent administrations in American history is not necessarily a replicable event. So those who view this Democratic victory as proof that Democrats must become the party of, say, counter-polarization, or of the angry base, or of whatever, should be reminded that George W. Bush will not be on the ballot in 2008. There's never one path to political success, and there's no guarantee that the political landscape in two years will look anything like it does today. On the blame front, even before the election there was some anticipatory carping about an alleged failure by Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, to throw money into enough races to make the Democratic victory even bigger. Give me a break. A win's a win.

Second, share the spotlight. There's been a lot of agonizing in recent years about the absence of any single voice for the Democratic Party. At present, we have two voices, those of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.). Now, mutual resentment between House and Senate members may be an ancient Washington tradition, but it would be nice to put that aside for a while. The last thing Democrats need is endless press about Pelosi and Reid jockeying for position and stepping on each other's message. The reality is that only presidents—and for a brief period, presidential candidates—truly personify a political party, for the very good reason that they are the only people who can make news by clearing their throats. So let's hope the new congressional poobahs can magnify their voices through cooperation, and it would also be nice if they coordinated with state and local Democrats, not to mention the Democratic National Committee as well.

Third, make it instantly clear that this will be a very different Congress. Democrats were able to seize the mantle of change in this election because it was impossible for Republicans to avoid accountability for the status quo. That's over. Right off the bat, Democrats should take bold steps to clean up both houses of Congress, enacting ethics and lobbying reform legislation (preferably tougher than what the Democratic caucuses agreed on earlier this year). Hearings on public financing of elections would be helpful. The House should make it clear that the Rules committee is no longer an inflexible graveyard for amendments that aren't endorsed by the leadership. Game-playing on roll-call votes should be eschewed. And yes, Congress should finally begin exercising the oversight and investigations responsibilities the GOP abandoned—especially with respect to the Iraq disaster—with one major caveat: The congressional leadership should quietly make it clear that its own committee and subcommittee chairs (most of whom will become very energized by the unfamiliar feel of the gavel) will be equally subject to oversight, and that caucus discipline will be applied to those who go far off message in order to watch themselves on television each night.

Fourth and finally, reject the false choice between "getting something done" and "throwing anvils to the GOP." Whenever possible, do both. Ideally, the legislative agenda should simultaneously reflect Democratic and public priorities, divide and embarrass Republicans, stand a chance of enactment or of provoking a Bush veto, and counter negative stereotypes about Democrats. Restoring budget controls and honest government accounting—and perhaps even attacking executive-branch cronyism and incompetence—would meet these standards. So would aggressive efforts to enact intelligence reform and prevent nuclear terrorism. And so would family-friendly legislation such as expanded medical leave. Don't be too neurotic about the possibility that George W. Bush might actually sign one or two of these bills. Soon enough, he'll be history. And if Democrats play their cards right, so will the idea of a lasting Republican majority.

Ed Kilgore is vice president for policy at the Democratic Leadership Council.

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Kick 'em while they're down

By Ed Kilgore

Congratulations, my fellow donkeys!

Not that long ago, plenty of smart people thought that gerrymandering guaranteed a Republican House until 2012 and that the red-state/blue-state divide guaranteed a Republican Senate until, oh, 2112. But you proved them wrong and won not only Congress, but a majority of the governorships to boot.

Take some time off to dance in the end zone, but not that long. Remember that in the grand scheme of things, you've won the battle of '06 but not the war for an enduring majority. And an even bigger battle is coming in '08, when Republicans, frantic to regain power, might even do something desperate, like change their ways.

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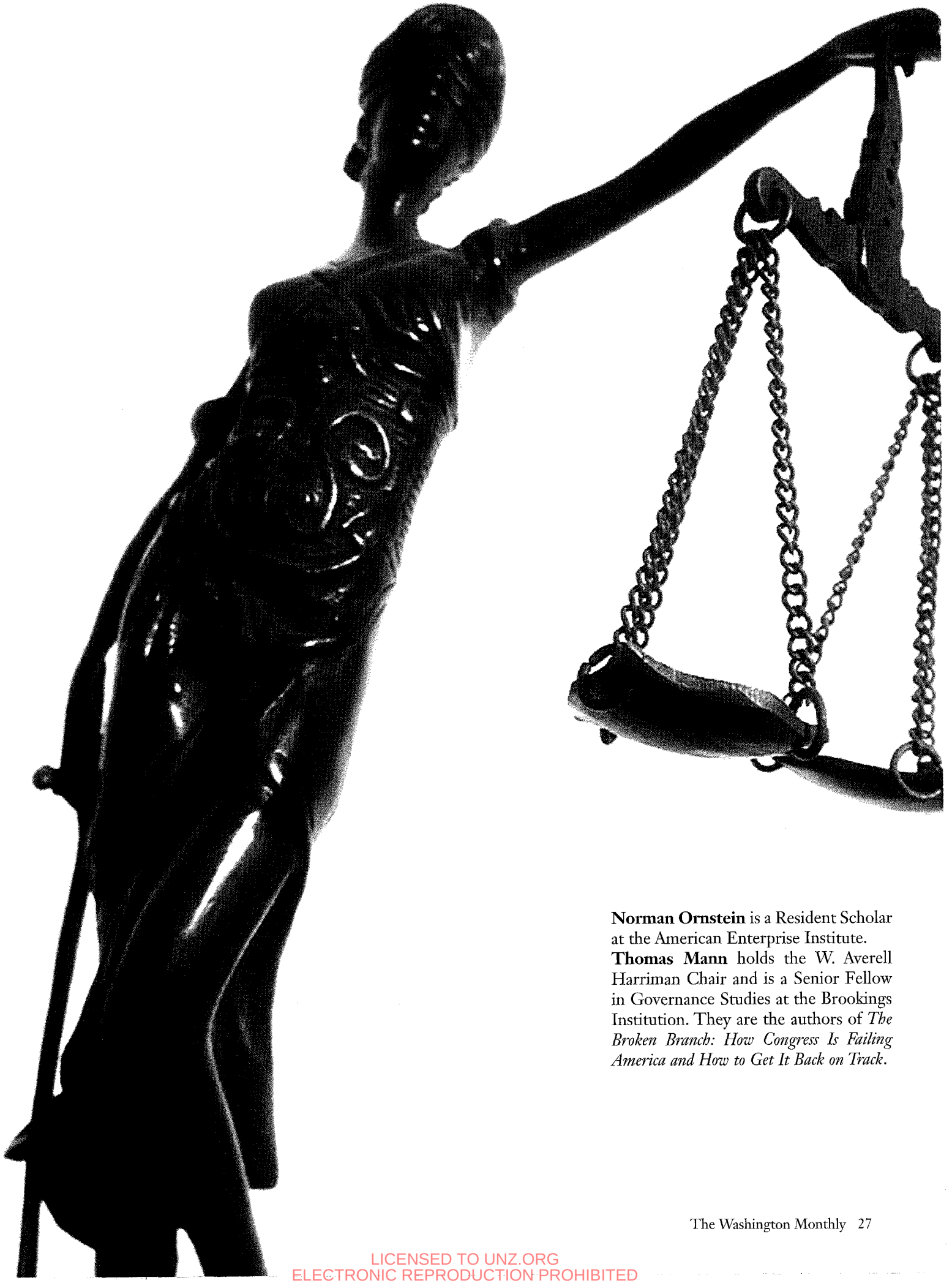

Norman Ornstein is a Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. **Thomas Mann** holds the W. Averell Harriman Chair and is a Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution. They are the authors of *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*.

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Don't do unto others

By Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein

Congratulations on a stunning victory, Madam Speaker. You have led your party into the majority after 12 difficult, disheartening, and often bitter years in the wilderness. You skillfully caught the wave of public discontent with President Bush and the Republican Congress, and avoided giving your opponents a target to distract voters from the GOP's shortcomings. Your elevation to the speakership is a fitting reward.

But what now? How should you run the House in the last two years of the Bush administration? During the campaign, Republicans offered a parade of horribles if Congress were to change hands: a "San Francisco Democrat" as speaker, working hand-in-hand with left-wing committee chairmen to raise taxes, stymie the president's efforts to win the war on terrorism, stifle global trade, abuse their subpoena power to paralyze the executive branch, impeach the president, and take every conceivable step to get even with Republicans for the alleged abuses they inflicted.

A caricature, to be sure, but many less partisan observers expect a Democratic majority to overplay its hand by reverting to a smash-mouth approach to running the House. Democratic leaders, they warn, will seek to limit Republican involvement at every turn, and will allow committee chairs to compensate for years of inadequate oversight by conducting highly aggressive and partisan investigations of past misbehavior.

Your public statements during the campaign, and the contents of your party's election platform, suggest a very different intent on your part. You have said that you would be speaker of the whole House, not just of the Democrats. You have promised a bipartisan administration of the chamber, including regular meetings between leaders of both parties. You have pledged a return to regular order for legislation—including full and open committee hearings and markups, adequate time for members to read bills and conference reports prior to their consideration on the floor, opportunities for full and fair debate and amendments to legislation, and adherence to the custom of 15 minutes for votes. In addition, you have explicitly ruled out impeachment hearings, and said that committee gavels would be wielded fairly and subpoena orders issued judiciously.

Some now argue that these words were designed for the campaign alone and that you would be a sucker to hamstring the new Democratic majority. We beg to differ. In this case, running the House in accordance with your public pledges makes sense politically. Doing good institutionally is the best way for Democrats to do well as a party.

The public is utterly disgusted with Congress. Corruption, conflicts of interest, bitter partisanship, symbolic rather than substantive actions, message politics, a consuming and transparent interest in maintaining power, a supine response to presidential authority, and the constant reminders that the ends justify any institutional means have drained the first branch of government of its effectiveness and its legitimacy. Aping recent GOP tactics would lead the public to turn on your new majority as they turned yesterday on the Republican majority. Charting a new course in the House offers some hope of improving public attitudes toward Congress, restoring a degree of institutional self-respect, and laying the groundwork for the 2008 presidential and congressional elections.

Presidential vetoes and Senate filibusters will loom large on the horizon as you fashion a legislative agenda. With supermajorities required to pass most legislation in the Senate, there could be limited opportunities to forge agreements between House and Senate, much less to bridge both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Working productively with the White House would require a major shift in the president's policy positions and approach to Congress. This seems most unlikely, but you should be prepared to respond positively if it materializes. In its absence, you can advance the modest agenda items—raising the minimum wage, making student loans more affordable, giving Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices—that you have already laid out, and that naturally attract both Democratic and Republican votes. Your colleagues can conduct fair and forward-looking hearings on the war in Iraq with the cooperation of an increasing number of Republican critics, and perform rigorous oversight in areas like the environment, the Medicare prescription-drug program, homeland security, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Justice Department. And you can, of course, challenge and block presidential initiatives that you and your party colleagues believe are harmful to the country's interest.

What you can do largely on your own is to take strong and decisive steps to mend the broken branch of government. A strong ethics package that includes a serious enforcement mechanism, with an independent commission and an effective professional staff working alongside the standing committee, is essential. So, too, is serious earmark reform that increases transparency and exposes the egregious abuses of recent years. A pledge to treat the minority party as a legitimate participant in the legislative process, and to return to regular order, is critical to improving the image and operation of Congress. Even more important are subsequent actions consistent with that pledge. These steps will annoy some of your Democratic colleagues, who would prefer to return to business as usual—but with them in charge. You may lose some votes on the floor. You may enrage a share of your liberal base, which wants aggressive action and even a measure of revenge. But you will also be doing the right thing—and sharply increasing the chances that you will be speaker for more than a single term.

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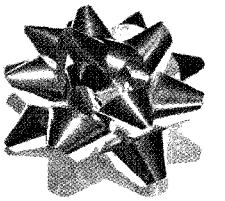
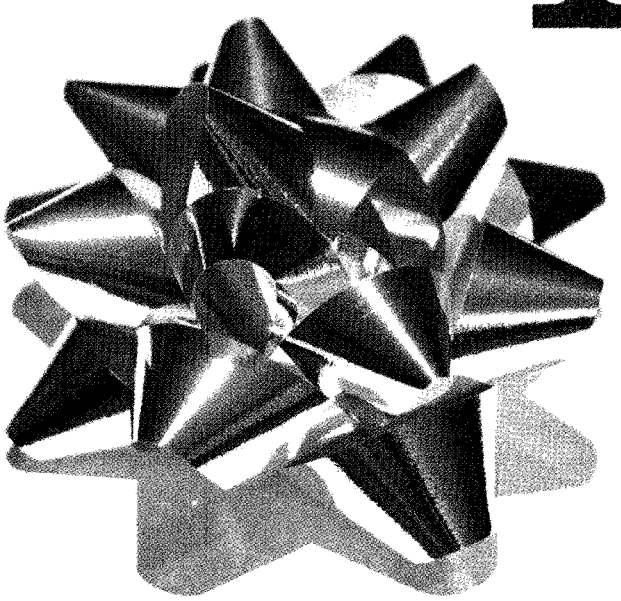
This holiday give everyone



Frankness Sense & Mirth



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doesn't matter whether the new House impeaches Bush (and, for good measure, Vice President Cheney) or simply makes it clear that the option is on the table. The specter of impeachment remains the powerful force for accountability that the Founders intended. So why hasn't Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) embraced the proposal by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the party's ranking member on the House Judiciary Committee, to create a "select committee to investigate the Administration's intent to go to war before congressional authorization, manipulation of pre-war intelligence, encouraging and countenancing torture, retaliating against critics, and to make recommendations regarding grounds for possible impeachment"? Conyers, the only remaining veteran on the committee of both the Nixon and Clinton impeachment fights, can't be dismissed as a mere partisan bomb-thrower. He has proposed a bipartisan panel like the one convened to consider Nixon's abuses, and has supported his charges with an extensively researched 250-page report. However, Pelosi continues to suggest that if Democrats pursue impeachment, they will be painted as vindictive partisans and sustain long-term political damage. She is wrong, and her misreading of the politics of accountability will lead Democrats to squander the political opportunity they now possess.

The notion that impeachment is "bad politics" for an opposition party simply isn't grounded in reality. Of the nine instances when impeachment resolutions were filed against presidents, the opposition party secured the presidency in the next election seven times—most recently when Bush succeeded Clinton. After members of an opposition party pressed for impeachment in Congress, that party has almost always maintained or improved its position in the House at the next general election. After conservative Republicans proposed Truman's impeachment in the fall of 1952, their party took control of both the House and the presidency. Democrats who moved to impeach Nixon in the summer of 1974 dramatically increased their presence in the House that fall. Even after Republicans bungled their impeachment of Clinton, their party retained control of the House—losing just five seats in the 1998 election that preceded the impeachment vote, and just two in the 2000 election that followed it. And, of course, they also captured the White House.

However, Democratic strategists have rewritten the history of the Clinton debacle to argue that impeachment is an electoral suicide pact. This notion that an opposition party must pull its punches rather than aggressively oppose a lawless presidency is the biggest mistake in politics.

In fact, impeachment is almost always smart politics for an opposition party, particularly one that is struggling to define itself. This is precisely because the initiative is so risky. Things have to be done right; impeachment cannot be a mere partisan game. The opposition party must persuade not merely its own members, but some members of the president's party, as well as a majority of Americans, that a commander in chief has so fundamentally betrayed his office that his removal must be contemplated. By marshalling convincing arguments to this end, an opposition party (and sometimes the reforming wing of an offending president's party) asserts itself as something more than a sports team competing for a title. When an entire political party speaks wisely of the weighty responsibility of impeachment, as Democrats did in 1974 but Republicans never fully did in 1998, frustrated voters see it afresh. A previously listless and disengaged political force begins to appear as an appropriate guardian of the nation's values.

This, of course, is the essential requirement of American politics, as opposed to the game currently played by so many retainers of both parties, who are interested only in maintaining their own entrenched status. Before the Democratic or Republican parties took shape, and even before Federalists and Anti-Federalists assembled their forces, the politics of the United States was defined by a party of revolution against the royal prerogative, the divine right of kings, and the corruptions of empire associated with unfettered monarchs.

A Democratic Party that has yet to effectively identify itself as a 21st-century force can learn a lot from 18th-century language and passions. Speaking unflinchingly about the rule of law and the legislative branch's duty to hold the executive to account isn't a civics lesson. It's a return to the fundamental discussion of the nation. If Democrats hope to build a new, more vital relationship with Americans, one that runs deeper than any single issue or individual, party leaders must overcome the fear of proposing impeachment that has paralyzed them as an opposition force. America needs an opposition party not merely to reshuffle the deck chairs on the Titanic, but to turn the ship of state back towards the Constitution, the system of checks and balances, and to that most appealing of American principles: the idea that the rule of law applies to every citizen. Such a direction will win support from Democrats, Greens, Libertarians, Independents, and principled Republicans. As Jefferson, the first Democrat, and the first democrat, once explained: "An elective despotism was not the government we fought for; but one which should not only be founded on free principles, but in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among general bodies of magistracy, as that no one could transcend their legal limits, without being effectually checked and restrained by the others."

John Nichols, who covers politics for *The Nation*, is the author of *The Genius of Impeachment: The Founders' Cure for Royalism*, from which this article is adapted.

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despotism" that Thomas Jefferson dreaded. If a president could be a "king for four years," they reasoned, then he could easily abuse his powers to make himself a king for longer, or worse, launch the wars of whim that James Madison saw as the "true nurse of executive aggrandizement."

Over the past 200 years, members of the House have proposed articles of impeachment against nine presidents. None of these initiatives reached the ultimate conclusion of a Senate vote convicting the president, and a resulting removal from office. Yet in most instances, the threat of impeachment effectively checked lawbreaking, irresponsible, or incompetent executives. When the Founders devised the impeachment process, they created a deliberately broad standard, which has been accepted through history by successive Congresses and the American people. To prove that an executive official is guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors," would-be impeachers make not a classic legal case, but rather a moral, practical—and yes, political—case that a member of the executive branch ought not be allowed to continue behaving badly. As such, when a president or vice president who is threatened with impeachment quits his office, or simply quits abusing it, the process has, for all practical purposes, succeeded.

Presidents John Tyler, James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson, and Harry Truman all forfeited opportunities to seek new terms after members of the House proposed impeachment or censure. Many factors entered into each man's calculus. But the fact that congressional discussions of impeachment attracted serious media coverage cannot be discounted. Nor should we underestimate the influence of an impeachment debate on actors in other branches of government. In 1952, while the United States was mired in the conflict in Korea, Truman claimed expansive war powers in order to seize the nation's steel plants. Conservative Republicans in the House quickly proposed impeachment, garnering considerable national attention and support; Sen. Everett McKinley Dirksen (R-Ill.) declared on a primetime national radio program that Congress could not "shirk its duty" to check and balance the president. The next day, the U.S. Supreme Court granted *certiorari* and scheduled arguments on the issue almost immediately, declaring: "Although this case has proceeded no further than the preliminary injunction stage, it is ripe for determination of the constitutional validity of the Executive Order on the record presented." In short order, a court appointed entirely by Democrats—and which included four Truman nominees—blocked the seizures. The landmark decision remains a key component of the jurisprudence protecting against abuses of executive power: Earlier this year, when the Supreme Court pronounced Bush's military tribunals unlawful in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, the court invoked the steel mills decision to demonstrate that the president had overstepped his constitutional authority.

Or, consider Vice President Spiro Agnew's departure from office. Early in 1973, as Agnew was preparing to run for the 1976 Republican presidential nomination, newspapers reported that as governor of Maryland, he had illegally taken money from contractors. Agnew planned to ride out the controversy, assuming he could use backroom deals and White House muscle to pressure federal prosecutors to back off. Though not a powerful vice president, Agnew was the Nixon administration's point man for attacks on the anti-war movement and congressional liberals. With Watergate evolving into a major scandal, he was expected to rally the troops against attempts to hold the president to account. Instead, Agnew faced the first accountability crisis. Soon after a number of House Republicans (including one Trent Lott from Mississippi) cosponsored an impeachment resolution, White House aides who feared a "double impeachment" scenario forced his hand, and Agnew quit.

These precedents tell us that, in a very real sense, it

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Be bipartisan: Impeach Bush

By John Nichols

What decided this election, more than any other factor, was the angry realization by a great many Americans that their president has lied to them about matters of war and peace, approved the warrantless wiretapping of their telephone conversations, and displayed a disdain for the Constitution and the rule of law unprecedented in the history of the American experiment. In other words, Democrats owe their electoral resurrection to a serious case of voters' remorse with regard to President Bush. Because of this, House Democrats have an obligation to the American people to check and balance the executive branch. The best way to do that is to get serious about impeachment. Indeed, if they don't, Democrats will suffer for disregarding not just their oaths of office, but also the will of the voters who entrusted them with the power to right the Republic. On this, the historical record is very clear: Holding the president to account is good for the country *and* good politics.

The history of impeachment is so rarely told that most Americans—and most members of Congress—see it as political kryptonite. In fact, impeachment has been an honorable, frequently employed tool from the nation's earliest years, when it was enshrined in the Constitution as the essential corrective to executive excess. The genius of impeachment is that it can restore a proper balance of powers even when the procedure isn't seen through to completion. This is as the Founders intended. It was well understood in the Republic's early days that the point of impeachment was to prevent the presidency from degenerating into the "elected

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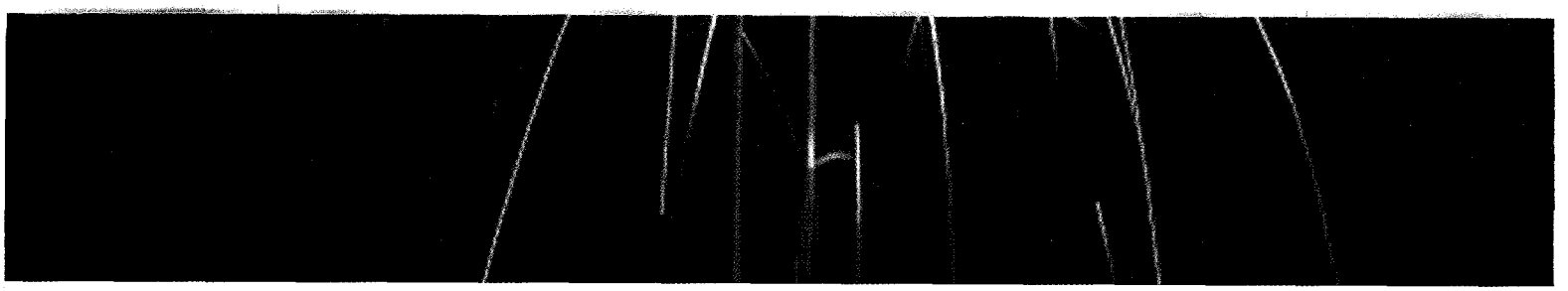

A "national vision," though, is not a list of things the congressional majority will "do" over the next two years. The Democrats have not won the power to do anything, and their first priority should be to disabuse the press and public of the notion that if the health-care crisis is not solved by 2008, they have failed. What they have won is a share of power, with an executive branch that has no intention of sharing power. At best, they've won the opportunity to set the terms of debate over the next two years and well into the future. It's not the power to win every fight, but to decide what we are going to fight about.

The tone of Democratic leadership here will be almost as important as the substance. The Democrats should learn from the Republicans, yes, but from their mistakes as much as their successes. The hubris, the top-down party discipline, the determination to bring every aspect of government under their control seemed for a time to be unstoppable political tactics, and some Democrats naturally seek to attain at least the discipline and ideological coherence of the DeLay Republicans. But those very things were also responsible for the Republican Revolution's collapse. The tone of Democratic politics must be one of problem-solving, collaboration, and openness to different points of view, exemplified by Speaker Pelosi's pre-election commitment to bipartisan government. (Whether Republicans can actually participate responsibly in such government remains to be seen.)

But without a clear set of substantive principles from which to operate—the sort of mission that Gingrich's Republicans brought with them—Democrats will have trouble taking advantage of that opportunity to set the agenda. The "six for '06" plan issued in August is fine as far as it goes—and approximately 10 times better than the 63-point plan House Democrats produced in 2004. But its achievable, incremental steps aren't quite ready for the monumental choices of the near future. Leaving Iraq aside, there are three.

First, Democrats don't really have an answer to the economic anxieties of the middle class. They don't quite know how to deal with the complicated mix of optimism and anxiety that characterizes even the upper-middle class in today's economy. They know that the old language of economic security from risk doesn't stand up against the slogans of opportunity and ownership that the right offers, even though those you're-on-you're-own policies make matters worse. There is a healthy debate going on in liberal intellectual circles about this. The best answer so far can be found in Jacob Hacker's new book, *The Great Risk Shift*, in which he proposes that we think of security as the basis for economic opportunity. However, this idea doesn't yet seem to have entered the consciousness of the political class.

Second, health care—which is at the center of these anxieties—still makes Democrats too skittish to take advantage of the opportunity. In one sense, this is a moment comparable to 1991, when the election of Harris Wofford to the Senate on a platform of universal health care put the issue back on the agenda. But there are too many different things going on right now. Some liberals see the success of state bills to force Wal-Mart to provide coverage as a chance to revive employer mandates; others return to the orthodoxy and efficiency of a single-payer system; and yet others acknowledge that the employer-based system is dead while single-payer is politically unsalable, and instead advocate a complex system that preserves a role for competition among private insurers, with heavy public subsidies. Unlike Iraq, on health care there must be some internal consensus. The sooner that Democrats can coalesce around the rough outlines of a health-care plan that they can all live with—as opposed to their ideal—the more likely it is that they will make progress on an issue that will ultimately require support from business and at least a few Republicans.

Finally, Democrats need to set the agenda on taxes and the budget. Taxes are going to go up; everyone knows that. Republicans can no longer frame the debate as simply tax-cutters v. tax-raisers. The tax revolt that began in the 1970s is over. Pre-election polls showed that Democrats had a significant advantage on the issue of taxes.

But unless the Democrats step forward and take responsibility for the urgency of the long-term budget crisis—the fact that at current revenue levels, government will soon have no money at all for anything other than Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, defense, and interest on the debt—they will be reduced to painful, piecemeal "revenue enhancements" in tiny, awkward steps year after year. The promise of a government that can provide the kind of economic security that helps individuals embrace the dynamic economy will slip further and further away, as each year we struggle just to pay for the Republican debts and avoid economic collapse. Over the next two years, Democrats must set the stage for a total overhaul of our tax system in 2009. Unlike the tax reform of 1986, it cannot be "revenue-neutral"; indeed, the guiding principle must be to raise enough money to finance the things that we have already agreed we want government to provide, and those we might want in the future. Everything will have to be on the table—income taxes, payroll taxes, new taxes on consumption and energy use—in order to make the system fairer to the middle class and better for economic growth even as it collects more revenue.

It would be better for the country if we could undertake this overhaul tomorrow, but it will have to wait for a different president. That gives Democrats two years to set the stage for what will be, if it happens, a true revolution, in the best sense of the word.

Mark Schmitt is a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation and a columnist for *The American Prospect*.

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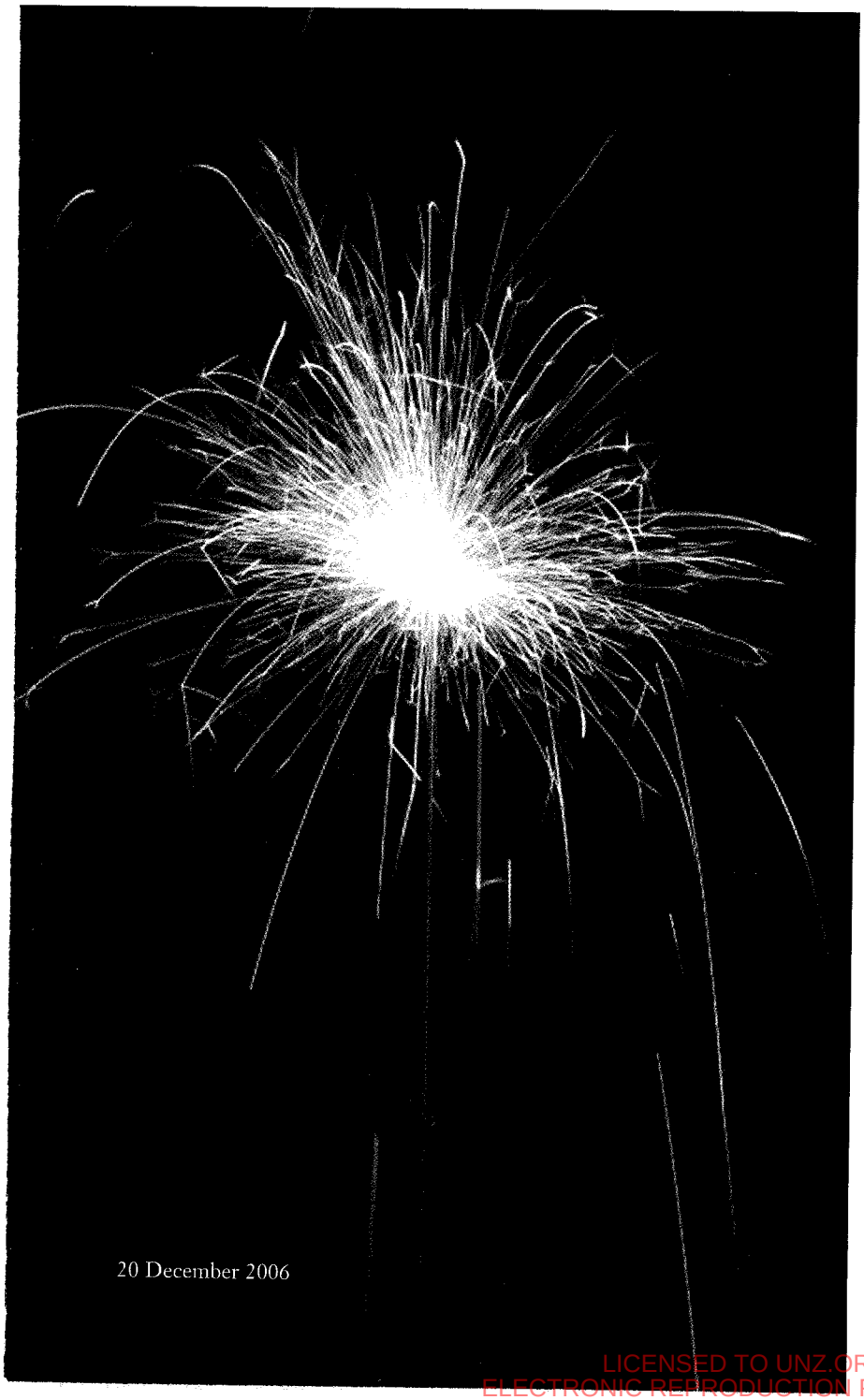
Say you want a revolution

By Mark Schmitt



20 December 2006

Back in 1994, legend has it, a Republican Revolution captured Washington. Revolution was surely the right word, featuring as it did a leader who would have ordered his portrait painted onto the façade of public buildings, except for the fact that he wanted public buildings torn down. Like any good revolution, it came with a manifesto, a pseudo-intellectual vanguard, a taste for theatrics, absurd promises, and a quick slide into decadence and corruption.

Now, 12 years later, the Democratic Party has recaptured the legislative branch in the same way. We talk about "the collapse of the Republican Revolution." But one phrase we never hear is "Democratic Revolution."

Revolutions are overrated, but the difference between the perception that the Republicans won something 12 years ago, whereas the Democrats are merely lucky beneficiaries of the Republican collapse, is telling. It is as if the Republicans are still at the center of politics, in defeat as in victory.

In some ways, that's an unfair perception. Much of what the Democrats did closely resembles the Republican accomplishments of the Gingrich years—most notably, putting up potentially competitive candidates in almost every district. Winning the seats from which tainted Republicans Mark Foley, Bob Ney, and Tom DeLay resigned might seem like pure dumb luck, but in previous cycles, those seats and many others captured this year went virtually uncontested by Democrats. The most striking thing about this year's wave of new congressional Democrats is not their number, but their quality, which is comparable to the legendary Class of 1974, whose skilled, attentive members kept winning, even in conservative districts, for decades. Slowly, steadily, Democrats are evolving into a true national party with an appealing presence everywhere.

The absence of a sense of affirmative victory is frustrating, but it is also an opportunity. The party can begin to shape its national vision from a position of strength rather than paralyzing weakness.

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Johnson taught in Cotulla, Texas, one of the country's poorest school districts. Nearly 40 years later, he spoke about the children at that school: "It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students, and to help people like them all over this country. But now I have that chance—and I'll let you in on a secret—I mean to use it."

Republicans came to power saying that government cannot do anything, and they set about to prove it. Despite a stated agenda of smaller government, lower taxes, and strong national defense, Republicans have left in their wake a larger government, a weakened national defense, and a higher share of the tax burden falling upon a larger share of the people.

Meanwhile, Democrats have been running scared from our *raison d'etre*—which is "effective government." Now, I don't expect Democrats to be plastering the slogan "effective government" on bumper stickers, but I do hope to see Democrats demonstrating—through legislative action and a restoration of the Constitution's demand for a balance of powers—that competent, well-administered government can have a positive impact on people's lives.

For this to happen, Congress must regain its status as a co-equal branch of government. That doesn't mean that we embrace the politics of retribution, but it does mean acting as a counterweight to the president. This is what the Founding Fathers had in mind. Only then can Democrats demonstrate effective government in action, and only then will faith in the idea of effective government be restored.

It won't be easy. Any majority we hold will be a slim one. While its members may share the label "Democrat," they may share little else. Leading such a slim majority (something I had to do from 2001 to 2002) requires that Democrats follow two key strategies. The first is to plow ahead in the unsexy but vitally important area of oversight. The second is to make progress on issues that enjoy unified Democratic support.

First, the oversight. A Democratic Congress can simultaneously satisfy its base and make a claim on being strong on national security by completing the long-delayed investigation into the politicization of intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war. Similarly, Congress can examine—and report to the American people in an unclassified form—how new national-security powers granted to the president are being used, and what impact they have on America's standing in the world. We can also examine corruption in government contracting. Finally, we can satisfy those of us who want real reform by stopping the explosion of earmarks and returning to transparent appropriation of the American people's tax dollars.

Of course, fixing how Congress runs is not enough. Democrats also have to fix what Congress produces. It is here that Congress can show that good policy can be synonymous with good politics, and pursue a couple of well-chosen policy goals that enjoy Democratic unity and national support.

When Democrats assumed our one-seat majority in the Senate in 2001, the first bill we enacted was the Patients' Bill of Rights. We followed that up with campaign-finance reform. It was the kind of action that the American people expected of Congress, and President Bush was forced to sign it (with little enthusiasm and less fanfare). Then with the Farm Bill. Same again. The American people got to see the difference between what happens under Democratic leadership and what happens under Republican leadership.

Today, Democrats need to present that contrast even more clearly, and nowhere are we better poised to do so than on energy. We are currently running the largest trade deficit in American history, and we spend half of that deficit to import oil. We are borrowing money from our economic competitors to subsidize some of the very people we are asking our soldiers to fight. Democrats can pass a progressive energy bill that weans us from our dependence on foreign oil, fights global warming, and forces the president to make a choice: the Middle East or the Midwest.

But there are many other areas of similar importance. Democrats can press to enact the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, leaving Republicans with a choice: work with Democrats or cede the label of the party of security. On the domestic front, Democrats are unified on the need for a minimum-wage increase and the need for Medicare to negotiate lower prescription-drug prices. The choices for Republicans mount. More tax breaks for the guy who sits in the corner office, or a modest raise for the person who cleans it? More profits for the pharmaceutical companies, or more help for the senior citizens who depend on their products?

Even within a slim majority, Democrats can clearly demonstrate a Democratic difference. By doing so, they can show government to be a force for progress that people will feel in their lives. Certainly, a Democratic leader as forceful as Tom DeLay might be useful to a party once in a while, but only if the person doesn't seek power for its own sake. That was the problem with Tom DeLay. It's also the problem with today's GOP. Leader Reid and Speaker Pelosi, by contrast, know LBJ's secret about using power for the greater good. And, like him, they mean to use it.

Tom Daschle, formerly the Senate majority leader, now works with the Center for American Progress and at Alston & Bird, LLP.

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Govern like LBJ not Tom DeLay

By Tom Daschle

Back when I was in the Senate, I would sometimes hear my Republican friends compare former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) to former Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (D-Texas), claiming that each was a master at influencing his colleagues—often through intimidation. There is some truth to that comparison. DeLay was nicknamed "the Hammer" for a reason, and my older Senate colleagues told me that there were few experiences more frightening than having the towering LBJ hulk over them to press his case.

When I was majority leader, intimidation wasn't my style. But Johnson was still an inspiration to me, for reasons that my GOP friends miss when they compare Johnson to DeLay. While DeLay and Johnson may have used similar means, their ends could not have been more different. One used his power to advance special interests, the other, the national interest.

DeLay's formative experience was as an exterminator who came to resent government regulations. Johnson's was as a public schoolteacher who came to understand government's indispensable role. In 1928 and 1929,

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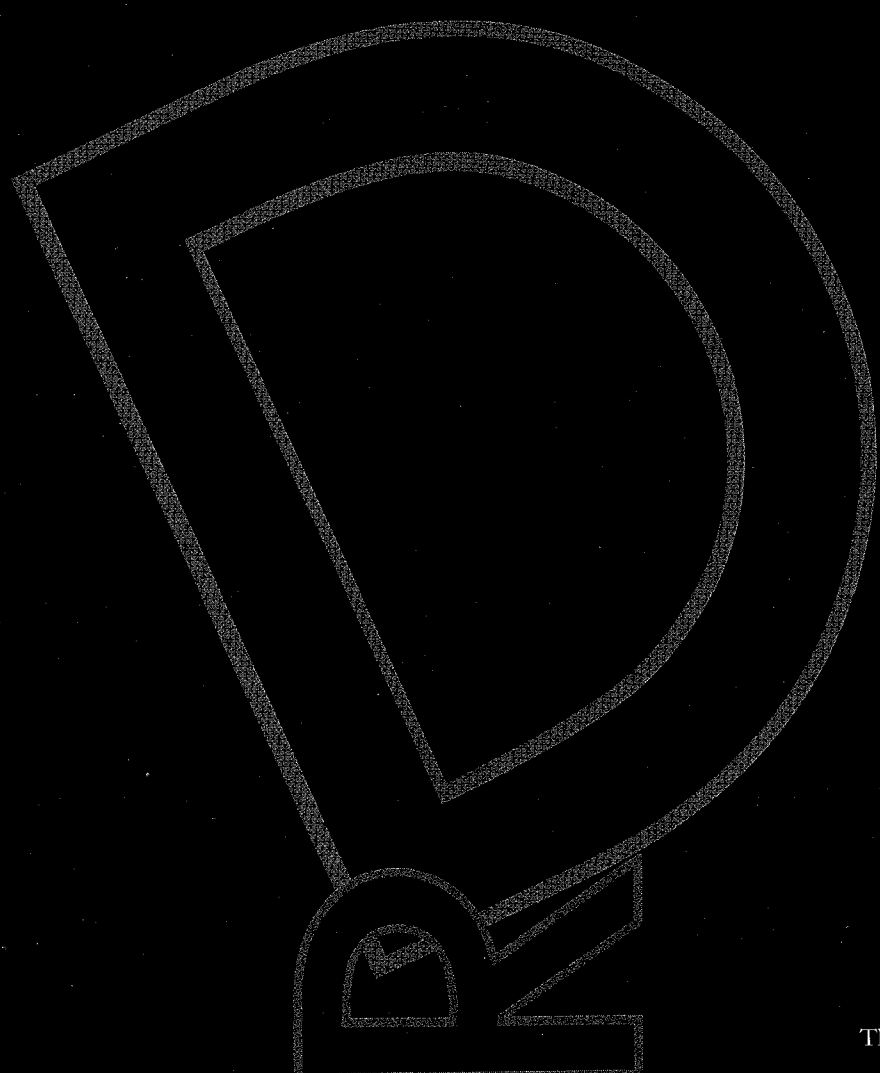
Tom Daschle
Mark Schmitt
John Nichols
Thomas Mann
Norman Ornstein
Ed Kilgore
David Gergen
Daniel Levy

DEMOCRATS WIN



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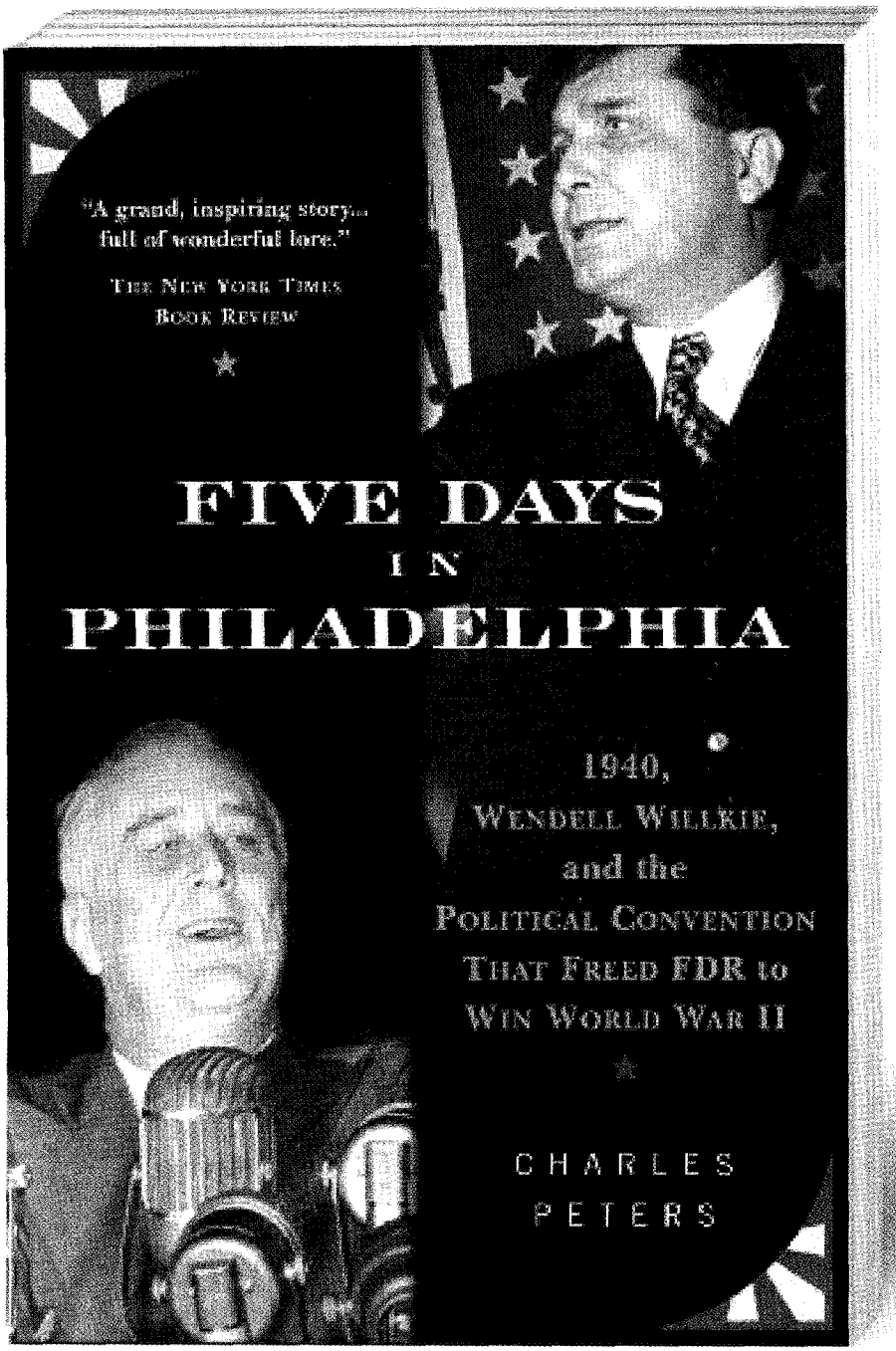
"A GRAND, INSPIRING STORY.... WONDERFUL LORE AND DETAIL."

Thomas Mallon, *The New York Times Book Review*



"The brilliance of Peters' book lies in its clear storytelling and its sure-handed portrait of a man largely lost in the mists of popular American memory. . . . There are wonderful lessons in this lean, amusing and warm narrative."

—*Los Angeles Times*

"Mr. Peters brings to his work a gift for evoking the spirit of the time. . . . [A] wonderfully readable book."

—*Wall Street Journal*

"This is one of the most intriguing political stories in all American history. . . ."

—*New York Post*

"[L]ovingly brings to life the era just before America entered the Second World War."

—*The New Yorker*

"A rousing read. . .for those who love America [and] politics. . . ."

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"[A] fizzy. . .rejoinder to The Plot Against America."

—*New York Times*

"Marvelous history—speculative, vividly written, engrossing."

—*The Wilson Quarterly*

"Mr. Peters' history lesson is efficient, clear as a windowpane, affable and sermon-free. He knows how to tell a story."

—*New York Observer*

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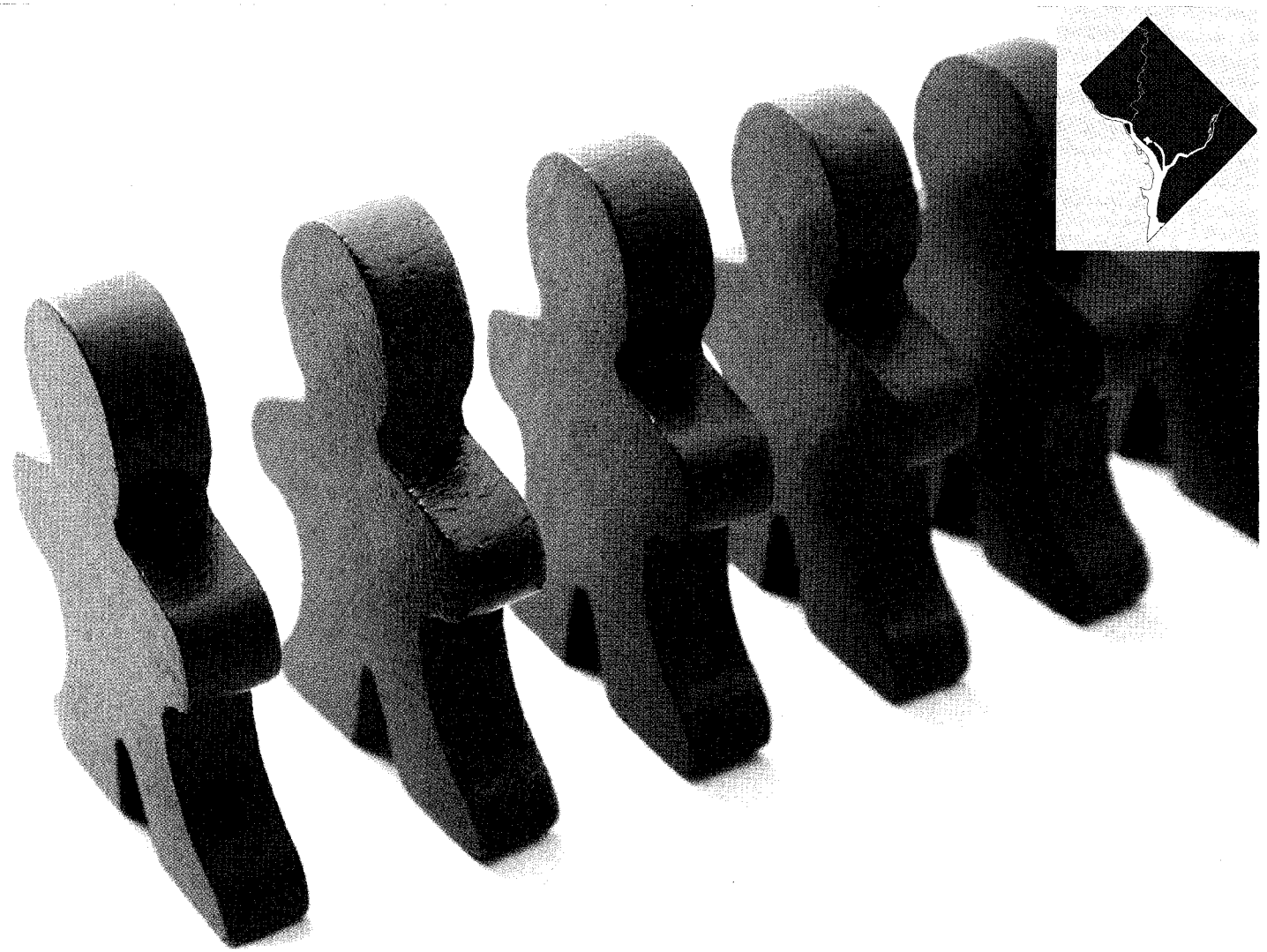

website for *Human Events.* With a cherubic young face placed squarely above a collar that is buttoned down tight enough to show the outline of the tie underneath, Bluey looks exactly like his politics. For now, he's keeping his chin up, but he admits that things look pretty bad. We joke about the raft of conservative legislative aides that will be looking for work this winter. Are there enough think tanks out there?

Soon, the night shifts to a Dupont Circle bar, and the wisecracks start. "Well, at least Kim Jong Il knocked Foley out of the news for an hour." A little more acidly, I hazard a tasteless joke about the news of the day: "You know who is more disappointed than Yankee fans that it was Cory Lidle who flew into that building in New York?" Everyone knows the punchline already. It's not funny because it's true.

A bright-eyed young woman in a billowy white skirt is smiling at me a bit too hard. She's a legislative aide for a GOP senator and is interrogating me."So, do you have a girlfriend?" she asks. Perhaps she thinks it'll be increasingly hard to find young conservatives in town after '06.

This landscape is new for people in my generation. When Gingrich and friends promised to lay siege to an out-of-control Congress, I was watching cartoons after school and chasing girls with braces. Now, Pelosi and friends promise to lay siege to an out-of-control Congress, the braces are gone, and I'm being chased by a Senate aide. Times change. Even if I've lost confidence in my party to do anything I wanted them to do—reduce the size of the federal government rather than increase it, or just behave with a shred of decency—it's daunting to think of the GOP losing its majority. Hadn't people just recently been speaking of the conservative majority as a near-permanent realignment?

While I'm hardly sanguine about Democrats controlling the House or Senate, I can't really say I'm that sorry to see the GOP get what it deserves, either. For people like me—and all the other young souls at AFF—the prospect of real opposition at least promises all the frights and thrills of growing up.

I make motions to leave, but I'm told that David Kirby, AFF's executive director, is buying another round. I raise my glass to the Senate aide and try to come up with an optimistic toast: "You know, I moved down here just this summer with only my misguided idealism. Now I have gin, too. I think we're all going to be just fine." She smiles politely, but maybe she doesn't need my good cheer just yet. Her boss, at least, is good until '08.

Michael Brendan Dougherty is a writer in Fairfax, Va.

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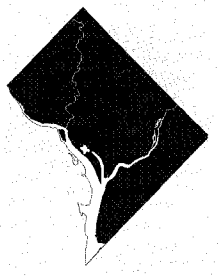

Social Adjustment

Washington's young conservatives ponder life in the minority.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

America's Future Foundation (AFF), a group geared towards ambitious young Washington conservatives like me, usually holds its monthly roundtable discussions at the Fund for American Studies on New Hampshire Avenue. At each meeting, a spread of wine, beer, chips, and guacamole makes a welcome appearance, and afterwards we head to a bar in Dupont Circle. The debate topics are always engaging, ranging from the high-minded ("The Iraq War: Stay the Course or Bring them Home?") to the low-down ("Cross-Party Dating: The Pick-Ups, Perils and Pitfalls"). The spirited debate and feverish networking are irresistible. Plus, the guacamole really is good.

But at the October AFF meeting, I notice a perceptible shift in mood—due, of course, to the specter of the November elections. In the back of the room, between chip munching, legislative aides share the gallows humor with right-wing journalists about getting "murdered in Indiana. Three seats just gone." Or even more violent hyperbole: "Pennsylvania hasn't seen this much blood on the ground since Lee invaded."

The negative vibe is pretty much summed up by the evening's debate topic: "Do Republicans deserve to lose?"

That the answer is "Yes" is already implied. Now the race is on to explain why. Eventually, after all, the broader movement will settle on a narrative of what went wrong. Every conservative wants to be the one to write it.

The first panelist to speak this evening is Ryan Sager, author of *The Elephant in the Room: Evangelicals, Libertarians and the Battle to Control the Republican Party*. Sager feels that the party has become too Southern and evangelical in character. That's his narrative, at least. Unfortunately, like so many panelists before him, Sager feels compelled to begin at the beginning, with a recounting of the history of the American conservative movement—how conservatives after World War II were united on a few things but divided on many others, how William F. Buckley began "defenestrating" (his word) the kooks from the conservative coalition, how Frank Meyer devised a philosophical justification called fusionism to bring together conservatives and libertarians, and so forth. Sitting through this recitation is akin to having Aunt Gertrude's wedding album thrown in your lap. You have to review the family history before you can roughhouse with your cousins in the backyard.

Then some fighting begins in earnest. Panelist Jonathan Collegio, a swell guy saddled with the un-swell role of spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, informs us lazy critics that "legislation is hard work, especially when we've had such a small majority in these years." The crowd isn't impressed. Someone behind me is quietly responding with a Bush impression: "It's hard work." Collegio goes on to paint a grim future: Speaker—Nancy Pelosi! House Ways and Means chairman—Charles Rangel! House Judiciary chairman—John Conyers! Oh my! Dave Weigel, a young editor from *Reason* magazine, and I mouth the words "talking points" to each other.

The discussion veers from domestic to foreign policy, although several of the panelists mention they are "putting the war to the side" because "we can have an argument about that" another time. No doubt. Sager, for his part, keeps the focus solidly at home and on the pocketbook: The GOP will lose the Western states from Montana down to Arizona if it doesn't shape up and stop passing things like the prescription-drug entitlement. In short, fiscal conservatism equals good. Religious conservatism, which wants zealotry to be on the dole, equals bad.

Maybe. Then again, couldn't someone just as easily confront Sager with the opposite argument? Didn't Bush squander a lot of political capital precisely on fiscally conservative schemes such as privatization? Maybe he'd have pleased the base more if he'd spent even more and built some walls along the border and taken more action against gay marriage. At the end of the day, the arguments all seem to boil down to something similar: If it were more like me, the Republican Party would be better off. It's failing because it's like you.

I accost another panelist, Robert Bluey, who is editor ofthe

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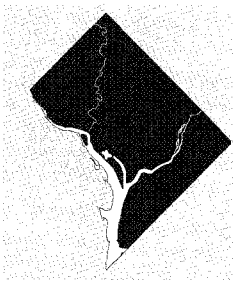

some of these retired generals criticize you and your efforts. What is your response to some of the things that have been said about you? And of course, the mainstream media has taken it and run with it.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: [*Laughter*].

GALLAGHER: It has to be awfully difficult for you to hear some of those potshots that have been leveled your way by some of these retired generals.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, you know there have always been criticisms made in every war.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on the "Rusty Humphries Show," April 18, 2006

HUMPHRIES: I just saw you on TV a minute ago and I've got to ask you, why do you put up with it? The stupid questions. You've got nothing to prove. You've got these generals, the critics; it's got to be driving you crazy.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Listen...I've been there before and I understand it. Change is hard for people, but by golly, I'm not going to sit here and not change this place, because it needs change.

HUMPHRIES: You keep hearing from these guys, Rumsfeld's a tough guy. You know what? Dang it, we're at war. I want a tough guy in that job.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: [*Laughter*]. That's nice, thank you.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on the "Bill Cunningham Show," 700 WLW, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 17, 2006

CUNNINGHAM: I want you to stay there, Donald, because I think you're the best, you're a hard-nosed guy, you know where the bodies are buried in Washington, DC, you know how the department works. Normal Americans who live in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana want you to stay there, and don't listen to the clowns at *The Washington Post* and CNN. You know what I'm saying?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: [*Laughter*]. Oh, you're amazing.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed by Mark Davis on WBAP 820, Dallas/Ft Worth, Texas, April 11, 2006

DAVIS: Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld. Continued success, good health to you, sir, God bless you. Poll numbers are what they are, but doggone it, I'll tell you it is those of us who have kept our eye on the ball, have patience, a sense of history, and a little bit of spine and guts to us are going to prevail, and I say that not just about talk-show guys or even defense secretaries, but people in our uniform doing the noble work of this war. God bless them and you for supporting them. I really appreciate it.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well said, Mark Davis. ♦

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD

Farah Stockman, Michael Kranish, Peter S. Canellos and Kevin Baron
The Boston Globe, October 8-11, 2006

Early in his first term, President Bush urged Congress to overturn 40-year-old rules keeping religion out of government contracting. The bill failed, but a remarkable investigation by *The Boston Globe* reveals that in the realm of foreign aid, Bush has quietly achieved his objective. Using obscure executive orders, he has enabled aid groups to hire employees based on faith and incorporate religion into their work. The percentage of aid money allocated to faith-based groups has doubled under his watch—and Christian organizations received 98.5 percent of such funds. Leaders of mainline churches criticized the policies as "political payback" to the religious right.

The *Globe* argues persuasively that Bush's orders have "systematically eliminated or weakened rules designed to enforce the separation of church and state," citing government documents and interviews with aid recipients. (One Kenyan woman recounts her conversion to Christianity, after learning in American-run health-care classes that her own deity was "a very tiresome god"). A USAID doctor explains the policy: "I think Christians... have a leg up on, you know, just the regular public system because there is an interest in developing a relationship... that leads them to know Christ as their savior and their lord."

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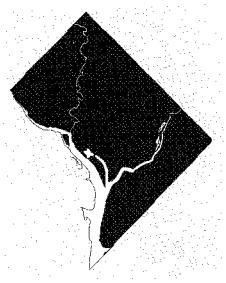

I'm guessing you can't understand, either—but why anybody would have a problem with this. I mean, we have appeasers in our country, and—

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I've tried to get people to take that speech and show me which sentence they didn't agree with.

HUMPHRIES: One—one sentence, please.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on "Bill Bennett's Morning In America," Aug. 22, 2006

BENNETT: Coming to my book party, you were the star of the party; you got the whole spotlight. It went off me, it was on you. All of that was fine, and then, I turn and look, and you are signing my book. I mean, what was going on there?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, I've never written a book, Bill, so I — why shouldn't I sign your book? (*Laughs.*)

BENNETT: (*Laughs.*) Well, it was a thrill for everybody who got one. They wanted your signature, not mine.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed by Kirby Wilbur, KVI 570 AM Seattle, WA, July 27, 2006

WILBUR: Now, as someone who has supported the effort from the very beginning, the liberation of Iraq, and still support our president as to what we're doing there, it seems to me that a lot of the American people are used to instant solutions—

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: (*Laughs.*)

WILBUR: —and things being solved in 23 minutes on a TV soap opera—and whether or not a free people here has the patience to see this through, given all the complications and how difficult it is.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, you know, you've called it…

…

WILBUR: Well, President Lincoln had to put up with the peace movement, draft riots, people urging the war couldn't be won, wanting to surrender. He persevered and he kept the country together. I hope that spirit of perseverance is here in America today.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Right.

WILBUR: Because think what would have happened back then; if it had prevailed in 1864, we would not have had one country.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Exactly….

…

WILBUR: All right. Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you for taking the time with us today and thank you for all you do for our country. And all we have to do is win, and I think we will.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you, Kirby.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on "The Monica Crowley Show," July 08, 2006

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: There's no way we can lose this battle with the terrorists in Iraq or in Afghanistan. The only place you could lose it, if you lost your will here in Washington, D.C.

CROWLEY: Amen to that. Amen to that. And you and I both worked for President Nixon and we understand the damage that that did to our side during the war in Vietnam ... I know you take a lot of hits.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: (*Laughs.*)

CROWLEY: I know that—and keep good humor about it, too.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: (*Laughs.*)

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on the "Hugh Hewitt Show," May 9, 2006

HEWITT: A few minutes ago, Mr. Secretary—I was watching your press conference—you blasted the media's coverage of the General Hayden nomination saying, quote, "The quality of the debate is pedestrian."

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: [*Laughter*]. Did I say that?

HEWITT: Yes, you did. I loved it. I applauded, actually.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on the "Brian and the Judge Show," Fox News Radio, May 10, 2006

KILMEADE: We understand that 3,500 Army soldiers will not be going to Iraq, will be staying in Germany. Some say this is a good sign—that things are stabilizing. What does the Secretary of Defense say?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I think it would be premature to come to that conclusion … I think that people are taking one tulip and deciding it's spring.

NAPOLITANO: Mr. Secretary— [*Laughter*]. Nicely put. One tulip and deciding it's spring.

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed on the "Mike Gallagher Show," April 28, 2006

GALLAGHER: Mr. Secretary, I have been pained. It has been painful on a very personal and professional level to see

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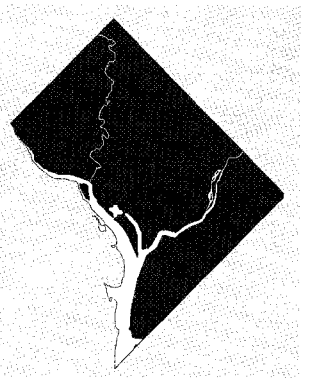
Ten Miles Square

"...such district (not exceeding ten miles square)...[shall] become the seat of the government of the United States." – THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES



GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOGRAPHER HARAZ N. GHANBARI

Another side of Rummy

By Spencer Ackerman

Few can doubt the vigor of Donald Rumsfeld, the defense secretary who can't be made to resign. (The 74-year-old eschews a chair at his desk, for instance, preferring to stand for over eight hours a day at a raised drafting table.) Not even an unprecedented onslaught against Rummy by retired Army and Marine generals earlier this year was enough to dent their target visibly. Bob Woodward might have destroyed his reputation in *State of Denial*, but it takes more than a public shaming to evict Rummy from the E-Ring.

Beneath the vigorous exterior, however, dwells a delicate soul too often wounded by the mainstream press. That's why these days, Rummy prefers to grant access, plenty of it, to journalists more to his liking: right-wing talk-radio hosts. While Rummy's efforts are in part strategic (to rally support for the war in Iraq), they're also personal. The truth is that even the most resolutely vigorous ego requires a gentle, periodic stroking, and right-wing radio touches Rummy in just the right places. What follows are samples of how to pleasure a secretary of defense:

Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed by Rusty Humphries, Talk Radio Network, Sept. 11, 2006

HUMPHRIES: Well—and [you] gave a speech a couple of days ago and got some heat over it. And I got to tell you —

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Good speech. (*Laughs.*)

HUMPHRIES: Historical. Historical.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I went back and reread that a couple of times, and I liked every word. (*Laughs.*)

HUMPHRIES: Me, too. I cannot understand why— and

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who think that the war was wrong or that we have totally bungled the occupation—believe we must stay in Iraq until there is a right time to leave.

Unfortunately, there is never a right time. We long ago lost the credibility with most Iraqis that might have enabled us to play a constructive role in their future. Staying much longer won't help. Remember that although the British stayed in India for 104 years, as soon as they left, Hindus and Muslims went into a frenzy of mutual slaughter that cost a million lives. The best we can do is give reasonable notice—I'm with John Murtha on six months—that will let responsible Iraqis know that now is the time to get their act together, and that will defuse the anger of Iraqis who are killing and maiming our soldiers simply because they want us to go. Finally, we should make orderly provisions for sanctuary, in this country or elsewhere, for the Iraqis who have stuck their necks out on our behalf and who fear reprisal. We must never repeat the horror of Saigon, where we left thousands of Vietnamese clamoring at our embassy gate as the last helicopter departed.

Reach out and gyp someone

"Telephone repair time irks clients," was the headline on a recent story by *The Charleston Gazette*. The *Gazette* story attributed the problem to Verizon's overtime policy. But it did not get at the reason for Verizon's reliance on overtime, which is that a few years ago, the company downsized its repair force in an effort to improve profits. The truth is that the breakup of AT&T left everyone with a great gain—much cheaper long distance rates—but with much poorer and more expensive local service. I'll never forget my shock when this magazine moved in the late 1980s after the breakup to find that it cost $1,000 to reconnect our phones, while the cost under the AT&T monopoly was so negligible that it did not impress itself on my memory.

That's why this item is patented

The U.S. patent office is often accused of issuing too many dubious patents. Especially those that are obtained by fly-by-night companies to blackmail legitimate patent holders with the threat of a patent infringement lawsuit. Why would the patent office do this? I'm indebted to our alumnus and current *New York Times* columnist Joseph Nocera for the answer, which is that the patent office gets its funding from the fees it collects when it issues a patent. In case you don't know, the F.D.A.'s drug approval process is similarly corrupted.

Another good lawsuit

Another example of the good trial lawyers can accomplish comes from a lawsuit against First Data Bank, which publishes a list of prescription drug prices used as benchmarks for determining what many health plans and state Medicaid programs pay pharmacies for drugs. *The Wall Street Journal*'s Barbara Martinez reports that First Data has made the drug companies and pharmacies happy by keeping the prices high. But the lawsuit has produced a settlement requiring the list prices to be lowered enough to result in a predicted saving of $4 billion in 2007 alone.

That's some harvest

In case you missed *The Washington Post* article on the crop insurance racket, here's what it disclosed. Last year, crop insurers received $829 million from the government in administrative fees to help run the program. On top of that, taxpayers "kicked in $2.3 billion" to subsidize the premiums farmers pay for crop insurance.

What did the farmers get from the insurance companies for their losses? Exactly $752 million. What was the annual profit of the insurance companies? $927 million.

Easy there, Norm

Norm Ornstein, in a recent appearance on Bill Moyers's TV show, was eloquent in his denunciation of how corrupt and partisan the U.S. Congress has become. But then he got carried away: "If the Founding Fathers were alive today, they would be turning over in their graves."

So much for the Magna Carta

The worst thing about the Military Commissions Act—recently passed by Congress to permit the Bush administration to bring the Guantanamo detainees to trial—is that it deprives detainees of the right to habeas corpus. What that right means is that, within a reasonable time after they are detained, their attorney can go before a judge to test the legitimacy of their detention. What can be wrong with that? The only risk is possible exposure of the fact that the government does not have good reason to keep the detainee in prison.

For evidence that the government is capable of making terrible mistakes in who it accuses of terrorism, I recommend you see "The Enemy Within," a "Frontline" special for PBS that tells how the Justice Department totally fabricated the exposure of a supposed al Qaeda cell in Lodi, Calif. At the end of the broadcast, Lowell Bergman, the producer, asks the U.S. attorney who originally brought the case, "So if I get this accurately, there has not been, nor is there now, an al Qaeda cell in Lodi, California?"

The U.S. attorney: "That's correct." ♦

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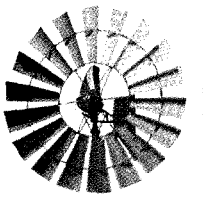

> There is no better proof of the power of lobbying than the fact that, five years after 9/11, private planes were still able to fly down the East River.

likelihood of adverse reactions, and considering the possibility of unhappy interactions with drugs the patient is already taking?

Private plane, public pain

One night in the 1960s, I was flying on a friend's private plane from New Haven to Washington. About a third of the way there, I looked out my window on the right and saw the breathtaking spectacle of New York's skyscrapers lit up in all their glory—and they were not miles away, but right outside my window. I wondered if this wasn't dangerous. Not because of terrorists, who we weren't worried about back then, but because I knew many private pilots had only the most modest training and were fully capable of veering off course and crashing into one of the tall buildings. I was, of course, flying down the East River, just as was Cory Lidle in October.

This was the beginning of a curiosity about the world of private planes—called general aviation. What I learned over the years is that they are underregulated, because the F.A.A. has been spineless in the face of the lobbying power of private plane owners, many of whom are wealthy and influential. There is no better proof of this lobbying power than the fact that, five years after 9/11, private planes were still able to fly down the East River. Even more worrisome to me is the danger from jets, which, as we all know, are capable of destroying large buildings. Private jets are multiplying rapidly because they make it possible for the wealthy to avoid the hassle of the lengthy security lines involved in regular airline travel. One problem with the jets is that they fly at similar altitudes to the regular airlines, with the resulting increase in the possibility of mid-air crashes, like the one that happened in Brazil.

Health benefits

If you doubt something is radically wrong with our current health-care system, please ponder the case of William McGuire, the departing CEO of one of the nation's largest health-care insurers, UnitedHealth Group Inc. McGuire is being forced out because of his participation in a stock options scandal. He "could leave the company with as much as $1.1 billion in stock options, retirement payments and other benefits," reports *The Wall Street Journal*. Think of all the people that much money could cure.

Offensive jets

In case you doubt the damage that could be done by a straying private jet, consider the Brazilian Embraer Legacy private aircraft. It was supposed to fly no higher than 36,000 feet, but it drifted to 37,000 feet, the space occupied by a regular Brazilian passenger plane. The pilot did not tune his radio to the correct frequency to hear ground controllers. Furthermore, his equipment was faulty, with a transponder either switched off or not working that would otherwise have sent a signal to the passenger jet and activated a collision warning device.

All seven people on the private jet survived the crash. All 154 people on the passenger plane did not.

It's Obama time

I was delighted to see that the moderate conservative David Brooks has written a column in *The New York Times* titled "Run, Barack, Run," in which he says that the times will "never again so compellingly require the gifts that he possesses." I agree.

Obama has the ability to see the wisdom in conservative and liberal positions that can bring the country together. His speaking ability can inspire. And the fact that he ends up mostly on the liberal side means to me, if not to Brooks, that he will usually lead in the right direction. Reeking electability, he clearly has the potential to be a good president. I pray that he lives up to it—and, not so incidentally, that he decides not to pose for more *Vogue* covers.

Time to go

The Baker-Hamilton commission on Iraq had not reported when we went to press, but I have two worries about it. James A. Baker is too much of a Bush loyalist to admit that the war was a terrible mistake. Lee Hamilton is a very conscientious man, and many conscientious Americans—even those

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appears to have "perpetrated a fraud" on taxpayers. The Abramoff scandal has already produced one conviction and seven guilty pleas. Adding Norquist could mean curtains for the total sellout lobbying he has encouraged by insisting on all-Republican lobbying firms.

It is true that few lobbying enterprises have ever been totally innocent. But at least the pre-Norquist custom on K Street, which balanced staffs with Democrats and Republicans, meant that lobbyists understood the importance of listening to the other side. The DeLay-Abramoff-Norquist strategy of riding roughshod over your opponent concedes nothing—especially to the public interest.

Gladwell's tipping point

You may recall that in 2000, this magazine published a debate on the Canadian health system between Adam Gopnik and Malcolm Gladwell. The reason I asked the two to debate was that I had learned that Gopnik was the author of an anonymous but very persuasive item in favor of the Canadian system published in *The New Yorker*'s "Talk of the Town" section. Earlier, I had, over a lunch with Malcolm Gladwell, found that he made the most effective case I'd heard against the Canadian system.

Six years later, in a *New Yorker* article titled "The Risk Pool," Gladwell implied that he now found himself in favor of the Canadian system. I wrote asking if my inference was correct. His reply was affirmative:

"Why have I changed my mind?.... I woke up one day and realized what much smarter people than me (Adam Gopnik) realized a long time ago, which is that the idea of employer-based health care is just plain stupid—and only our familiarity with it and sheer inertia prevent us from rising up in rebellion. I always try to think of a suitable analogy and fail. The closest I can come to is, imagine if we had employer-based subways in New York. You could ride the subway if you had a job. But if you lost your job, you would either have to walk or pay a prohibitively expensive subway surcharge. Of course if you lost your job you would need the subway more than ever because you couldn't afford taxis, and you would need to travel around looking for work."

Gladwell went on to say that the mistake he made in the *Monthly* debate was, "I confused a funding problem with a systemic problem.... On a per-capita basis, Canadians now spend on health care something like 60 percent of what Americans spend. If that were increased to say, 65 percent, many of the rationing and wait-time problems would be alleviated. The problem with American health care, by contrast, is systemic. No simple increase in funding fixes the problem."

A good lawsuit

As regular readers know, I'm capable of considerable cynicism concerning my former brethren, trial lawyers. Sometimes, however, they are essential to making the system work. Such, I believe, is the case with a suit filed by Randal McCloy Jr. and families of the dead Sago miners against the International Coal Group for its indifference to their safety. A hefty verdict in their favor might cause coal companies to decide that providing safe working conditions is cheaper than their potential liability for not doing so.

Very basic training

From the time that Bush's choice as viceroy, L. Paul Bremer, disbanded the Iraqi army in the spring of 2003, it has been clear that one of the urgent tasks confronting us is to train a new force. Administration officials repeatedly told us that a new Iraqi army would be able to take over. Yet three and a half years have passed, and the Iraqi army is nowhere near ready to take over.

A few months ago, we noted Greg Jaffe's report from *The Wall Street Journal* about how miserably housed the Iraqi troops are. Now comes another *Journal* story by Jaffe about the quality of training and equipment the U.S. has provided. He tells of the shock experienced by Lt. Col. Nick Demas, when he learned that he had been assigned "inexperienced reservists from Maryland.... to live with, train, and mentor" Iraqi troops. Jaffe makes clear the colonel's situation was not atypical. One factor: "the U.S. army culture that discourages good officers from taking advisory posts."

As for the equipment we give the Iraqi army, the advisors are warned, "you will not have all the radios, weapons, night vision devices and field gear issued to a U.S. battalion." This turns out to be a considerable understatement. One advisor told Jaffe, "we had to beg for support. It was like pulling teeth."

Overdosed

As you advance through your senior years—I'll be 80 this month—physicians tend to prescribe more and more drugs to keep you going. A resulting problem is that you tend to have more and more adverse reactions, ranging from irritating rashes to life-threatening conditions. I've had three in just the last couple of years. And I'm not alone. According to the Associated Press' Lindsey Tanner, government research shows that each year, more than 700,000 Americans experience reactions serious enough to send them to the emergency room. Doesn't this suggest that physicians and pharmacists should be more careful about prescribing, exploring the

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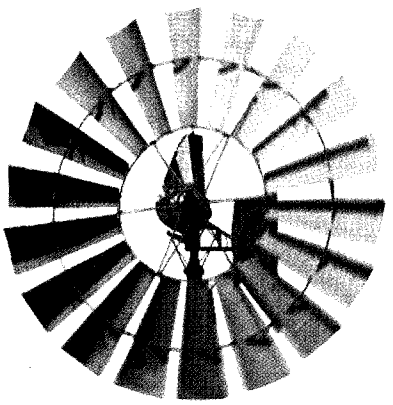
Tilting at windmills

By Charles Peters



The executive ranch

For a glimpse into the mindset of the Bushies, I offer the example of Dr. Richard Carmona, the man the president chose to be his Surgeon General in 2002. Carmona left that post in July for a new position "where I can continue my work as Surgeon General to promote and advance the health of the nation."

Carmona will do this as vice chairman and chief executive of the health division of Canyon Ranch, which features a health resort facility in Tucson, Ariz., which charges $2,340 per person for four nights in a double room. That's the bargain off-season rate. In season, the rate is $3,280, according to *The Wall Street Journal.*

That's the Republican way to "promote and advance the health of the nation."

Commission omission

On July 10, 2001, the CIA's George Tenet and Cofer Black gave Condoleezza Rice an urgent warning about al Qaeda, which she ignored during the two months before 9/11. Why wasn't that mentioned in the 9/11 Commission Report? Could it have anything to do with the fact that the commission's executive director, Philip D. Zelikow, was a former colleague of Rice's in the Bush I administration, and that he is now serving as one of her top subordinates at the State Department?

Breaking the news

In late September, the number of Americans wounded in Iraq passed 20,000, and at last the shocking story of the wounded reached the front pages, as *The Washington Post* made it the lead story on Sunday, Oct. 8.

I was heartened because I thought that now the story would receive the attention it deserves from the rest of the media. But later that day, the story was swamped by news of the North Korean nuclear test.

The same fate awaited the estimate of more than 600,000 war-related Iraqi civilian deaths since Bush invaded. The study had been conducted by respected researchers from Johns Hopkins University and Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, funded by M.I.T., and peer-reviewed and published by the British medical journal, *The Lancet.* But after one day in the sun, that story also disappeared. I've forgotten what replaced it—surely it was something crucial, like the Madonna adoption news.

Not-so-instant messaging

One detail I hadn't known about how the Republican leadership kept the lid on the Foley scandal was called to my attention by *The Charleston Gazette's* Scott Finn. He points out that although John Shimkus, chairman of the House page board, knew about the Foley emails months earlier, he did not disclose them to the other members of the committee until Foley resigned. Finn's source was not a partisan Democrat, but a Republican congresswoman.

Macro credit for micro credit

Anyone who has ever been involved in the struggle to help developing nations has to love the award of a Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus for his program of tiny loans to help poor people start businesses. When I worked for the Peace Corps in the 1960s, it was already clear that the absence of credit for the poor was a major obstacle to their escape from poverty. Most foreign-aid agencies, like the World Bank or the U.S. Agency for International Development, favored large projects that sounded impressive and were bureaucratically more convenient—it's easier to write one big check than thousands of small ones.

Unfortunately, a large percentage of the big projects were boondoggles that helped only a few in the host country's ruling elite. What was desperately needed was just what Yunus has done. Bless him and the Nobel committee for recognizing his achievement.

Over for Grover

Several more nails were pounded into the coffin that is Grover Norquist's reputation, when a report of the Senate Finance committee found that Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform

> "Several more nails were pounded into the coffin that is Grover Norquist's reputation."

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LETTERS

> **George W. Bush and his flock in Congress** continue to overwhelm me with their incompetence. Thank you for expressing so well the frustration of this former Republican.

currently run the Republican Party have always and only been interested in one thing—corporate control of government and the illusion of power that comes with it. In the history of the human race, this approach has never lasted.

Mr. Buckley and his ilk enabled the people about whom they now complain. They brought in Karl Rove. They should be in charge of cleaning up the mess that they created.

Richard Weiner
Adjunct Professor,
Department of Justice Studies
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

Divide and rule

William A. Niskanen ("Give divided government a chance," October) makes some great points about the blunders of one-party government, and aptly points to the Vietnam debacle under President Lyndon Johnson.

But a further point must be made. In 1968, Democrats rebelled against LBJ. In 2004, Republicans drank the Kool-Aid, pretended all was well, and put GOP unity and "victory" ahead of the welfare of our nation.

The results of putting partisanship ahead of patriotism have been tragic.

Bill Mishler
San Jose, Calif.

Thanks for saying what no one else is willing to say. Specifically, any remaining Republican claim on the fiscal high ground now lies at the bottom of the swamp that is our nation's capital. It's a shame that in order to achieve divided government, we Republicans have to potentially relinquish the House, where the revenue bills originate, as opposed to the Senate. But the silver lining is that a Speaker Pelosi would be a lot more radioactive than a Majority Leader Reid. So it may all work out well for the GOP (hopefully with Mitt Romney at the top of the ticket) in the 2008 general election.

John Godbee
Baton Rouge, La.

The end of the party?

True, Sen. Mitch McConnell's (R-Ky.) turn against Gov. Ernie Fletcher is unquestionably the death of Fletcher's career ("Bluegrass Baron," by Cliff Schecter, October). But the price is the destruction of the Kentucky Republican Party. The machine Mitch built is in bloody pieces over the Fletcher-McConnell split, with local Republicans mangling each other in the scramble for position atop the pile of bodies. The likely result is a return of the state Senate to Democratic control and at least two, and probably three, U.S. House losses this November (Davis, Northup, and Lewis)—plus a Democratic sweep of the governor's and other state offices next year.

Don't be surprised when McConnell expands his hubristic miscalculations to a national stage. If you want to see what McConnell will do for national Republicans, watch how he's destroying his party right here at home.

Lisa Aug
Waddy, Ky.

Poor man's army

It is not just 19-year-olds who fight our wars ("Uniform Disaster" by Joe Galloway, October). They are economically disabled, poorly educated, rural 19-year-olds who have little insight about national and international conflicts and politics. They are high-school dropouts with G.E.D.s, teens who have records in juvenile courts, recruiters' dream kids who need an avenue to get their records expunged, who need a route to a skill, who take the gamble of life better or death early. They are from our lowest economic class reaching for a rung to begin the climb up the ladder.

Bertram S. Allen Jr.
Professor of Psychology,
Milligan College
Milligan, Tenn.

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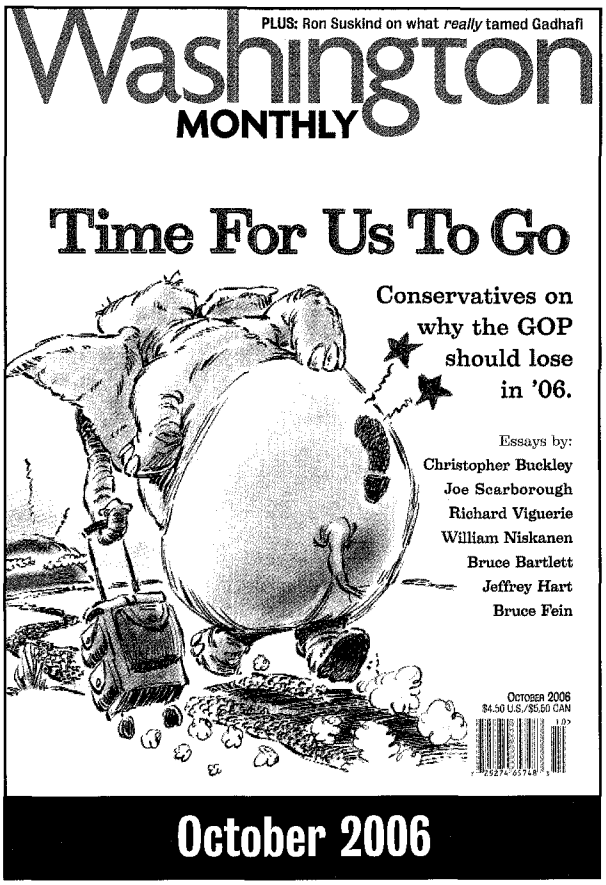

Conservative revolt

Right on! ("Let's quit while we're behind" by Christopher Buckley, October). Buckley expresses precisely the same frustrations that I share, ones that drove me to register as an Independent. Unfortunately I voted for George W. Bush twice, simply because I found both Gore and Kerry to be arrogant and unlikable. Imagine my horror upon realizing that Bush is even more arrogant.

I grew up with the same influences as Buckley—his father, William F. Buckley Jr., chief among them. I cast my first presidential vote for Barry Goldwater. But George W. Bush and his flock in Congress continue to overwhelm me with their incompetence and their embrace of the ideology of the religious right, which prefers to tell me and the rest of America how to live our personal lives. Thank God Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) is not my personal physician.

Buckley is so accurate in his description of George H.W. Bush, whom I met several times, beginning when he ran for the Senate in Texas. I was the state director for his 1988 campaign. And Buckley's father has had an immense influence on the development of my own political philosophy. I count among my life's treasures the fact that I got to know William F. Buckley when I was president of the Conservative Club at Rutgers-Newark.

Thank you for expressing so well the frustration of this former Republican.

John F. Scott
Buckhannon, W.Va.

> "When are conservatives going to realize that conservatism doesn't work because conservatism doesn't work? It isn't anybody else's fault."

As a Democrat who has lived through more than a few of our own embarrassing blunders in governing, I appreciate Buckley's candor. There is nothing wrong with admitting that your party has gone down the wrong path, and that it needs to find its way back to the main highway.

I probably disagree with Mr. Buckley on all the main issues over which the two parties have jousted for the last 60 or so years, but I think we are both agreed that Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Perle, and the rest of the neocons are not a fair sampling of those who consider themselves Republicans. They do not represent the Republican voters I have lived around. The Republican electorate has been tricked by these people, plain and simple. Few, however, are willing to acknowledge that publicly, as Mr. Buckley has. Until they do, there will not be much change.

Norman Gutzmer
Amarillo, Texas

So Bill Clinton had to come in and clean up the mess created by Reagan and Bush I, and now Mr. Buckley wants Hillary to come in and clean up the mess created by Bush II.

How predictable.

When are conservatives going to realize that conservatism doesn't work because conservatism doesn't work? It isn't anybody else's fault. The Buckleys all write well, but the ability to manipulate the English language doesn't make you insightful. It just makes you manipulative.

The oligarchs and their minions who

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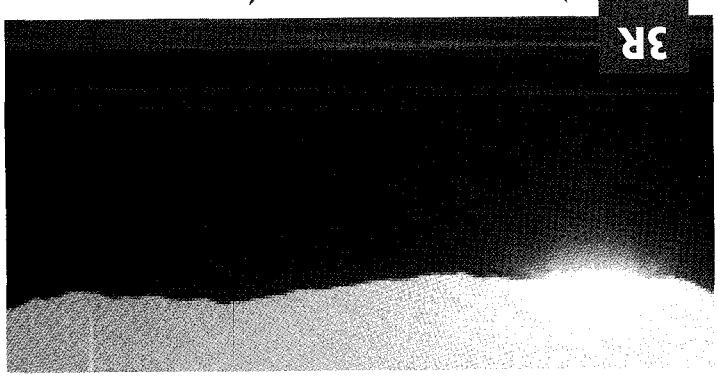

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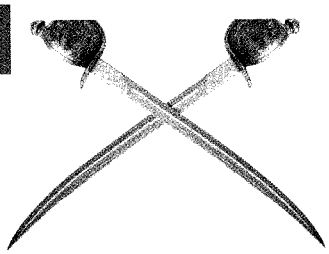

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A Note To Our Readers

Ever since *The Chicago Daily Tribune* confidently proclaimed "Dewey Defeats Truman" in 1948, print journalists have been well aware of the pitfalls of publishing on the eve of an election. Our December issue, which went to press in late October, confronted us with that very problem, and we've dealt with it decisively—by having it both ways. We've created two cover packages: one that assumes a Democratic victory, the other, that the GOP holds on. To do so, we rounded up a bipartisan group of veteran Washington observers and asked them to write short pieces in response to either outcome, or both.

Hindsight may be 20/20, but foresight can often be more revealing. Whenever you're reading this, and regardless of what happens (or *happened*) on November 7, we think you'll find Dick Armey's surprisingly ambivalent musings on a GOP "win" as thought-provoking as Tom Daschle's advice to "victorious" Democrats.

There's another advantage to our approach: If you don't like the actual election results, you can always flip the magazine over and pretend things turned out differently.

–The Editors

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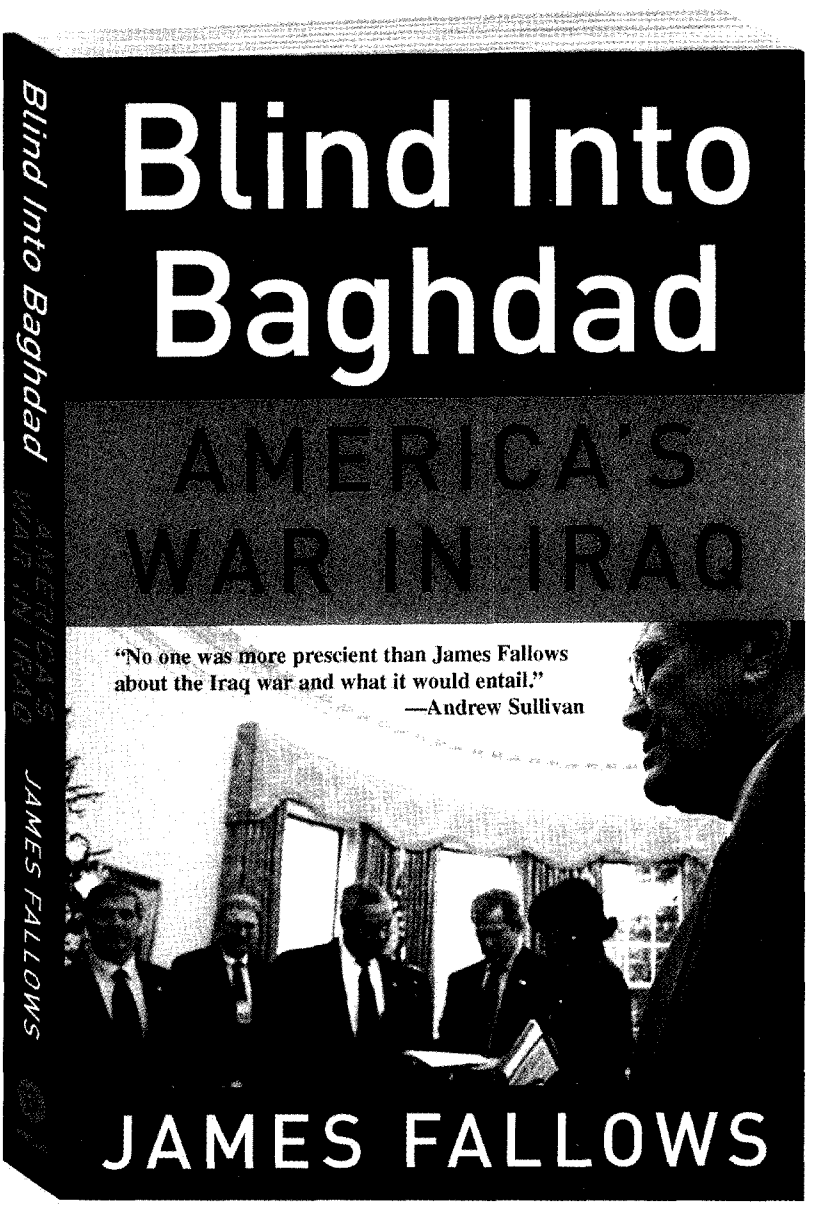
"No one was more prescient than James Fallows about the Iraq war and what it would entail." —ANDREW SULLIVAN

A collection of groundbreaking articles by award-winning journalist James Fallows



"[The] articles on Iraq were among the most brilliant and important works American journalism has ever produced. They hit the trifecta—in each the reporting, thinking, and writing were exemplary."
—*The New Republic*

"James Fallows has made invaluable contributions to our knowledge of the planning and conduct of the war in Iraq. This is essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand what went wrong."
—**GENERAL ANTHONY ZINNI (ret.), U.S. Marine Corps**

"The Iraq imbroglio has produced some amazing and, for war supporters, painful essays. . . . "Blind Into Baghdad". . . show[s] that most of what happened in postwar Iraq was predicted prewar by government analysts. It's just that their reports were suppressed or ignored by people making the decisions."
—**DAVID BROOKS,** *The New York Times*

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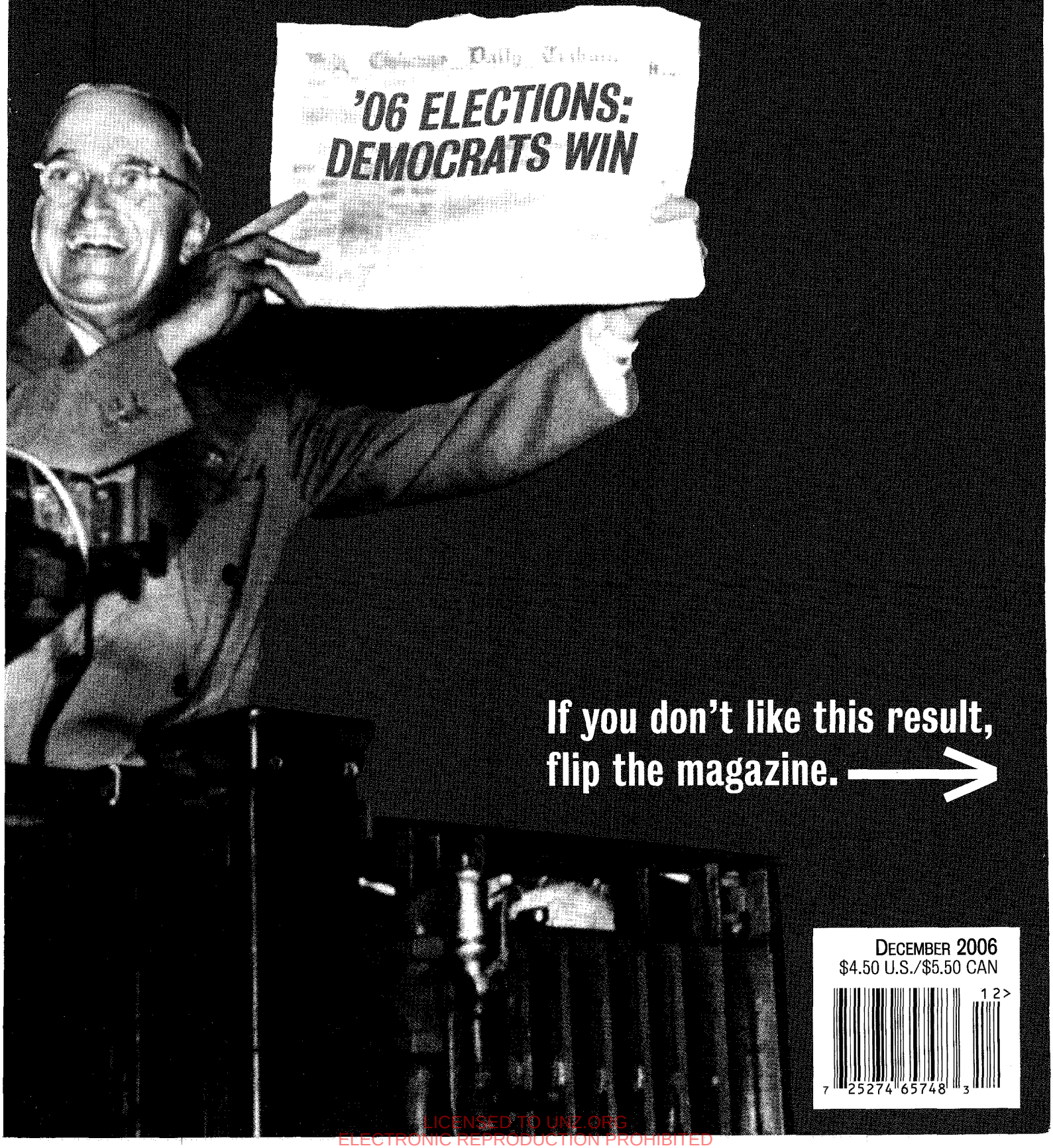

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